

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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NEVER FORGOTTEN.

PART THE SECOND.

CHAPTER IV. THE HOUSE IN ALFRED-PLACE.

IN time, over the interval of two months. In space, from Paris to London. From the Grand Hotel to a bright cozy compact house—one of a clean series in Alfred-place, standing together like a row of Sunday-school children. Neighbours hardly knew who lived there, but the number was down in the note-books, and in the minds of many skilful men; was familiar at the Great Literary Club, and the name of Pauline Manuel lifted many faces from the Times or Globe. Among these was the face of, say, a Herculean humorist who growled pleasantly at a hollow world over claret; the faces of leading witty men, who brought their jokes and quips to dinners, like conjurors bringing their apparatus to a child's party, and who, like the conjurors, would not be received without their apparatus; of leading clergymen, hard thoughtful men, who dug and trenched in the heavy soil of reviews; of younger and more unclerical men, who did the ornamental gardening of magazines; of a placid Italian barytone, gentleman in everything save birth; of a bishop or two; of a doctor or two; of a lawyer or two; of a member of parliament or two. These, with the faces of their wives, were Pauline Manuel's constituency—a miniature world in itself. In that small house in Alfred-place was a small round table that held exactly eight; it was lighted by white Dresden candelabra, and the light fell usually on a witty face, a clerical-reviewing face, a singing, a barristerial, a senatorial, or an editorial face. They were delightful little meals—choice in all points.

How she drifted into such circles, or rather how they came floating and drifting about her, was through the mere general attraction which a bright flashing, dazzling face, a face that people looked long after in the street, always exercises. Lord Puttenham, who had but one standard of beauty, and who always introduced that standard by an unnecessary appeal to his Maker, said she was like Grisi in her best days. To the house in Alfred-place came fossil old noblemen like Lord Puttenham, about as infirm as old furniture; tall, florid, general officers, as fond of the warm rays of beauty as of sitting in the sun; lively wives of

lively men; in short, a delightful miscellany. At Alfred-place were the most delightful of morning calls, where new music was heard, and new painting worked at; of afternoon visits, where tea was drunk, and talk mixed with the tea like cream, and where the little dinner was spread; from Alfred-place went the pleasant party to opera or play, and to Alfred-place came home the pleasant party from opera or play to the little supper on the round table. All liked her. Older acquaintances were eager to know her better; others outside were struggling and canvassing to be admitted. It was noted how eager she was to extend her list. She wished to know everybody. "You only care for new faces," said Fobley of the Guards; "half a dozen in the day—like gloves."

Pauline, who had for many minutes been eagerly searching a gay crowd, flashed him a gay smile. "I do," she said; "I like variety. The man from Covent-garden changes these flowers for me every second day. Mr. Griesbach," she said to that reviewer of Gibbon, Pitt, and other heavy subjects, "being at a window and seeing a procession go by all day long, that is the true notion of life! Don't you think so?"

When a new soldier came home from the Caroo Islands, or a new sailor from the Main, she always said to some of her staff, "Bring him to me." Travellers of any degree she relished, making them sit down beside her. The young soldier would think fatuously of his own charms, the seaman would glow with his pinkest blushes.

"O," she would say, "I have known so many who have gone out *there*. It must be delightful. I envy you all."

"We were up at Yalalabad, you know," the fatuous youth would say. "I and Filmer and old Jekyl. We used to dine with the commissioner, an old Scotchman, with a daughter, and——"

"Did you ever meet with Sir Hopkins Pocock out there?"

"Who? Never heard of him—who's he?"

"O, nothing," said she. "An old friend—I thought you might."

From that instant the youth—and he was but a type of many more who suffered under the same process—found the soft warm water growing suddenly colder, until he had to leap out and fly in confusion. So with an agreeable traveller,

newly returned and writing a book—Six Months with the Queen of Bushra—Bushra was not far, that is to say, less than six hundred miles, from Sir Hopkins's government. O, yes, he had made an excursion as he came home—governor civil enough—wanted him (the traveller) to dine with him, but didn't. Saw nothing—saw nobody—heard nothing, and heard of nobody. Nothing to the Queen of Bushra, who gave him a bracelet of teeth, which she had gathered with her own hands. The water grew icy cold with startling suddenness.

So with the tourist, the author of the lively journal *From Spa to Spa*. "You meet all sorts of people at those wicked places, Mr. Duncan Davis," she would say, with a smile, "and touch them off so cleverly. I sat up till one last night reading the book you sent me. I have friends that go every year, and can tell me nothing. By the way, did you ever fall in with a Mr. Carter and his family?"

"Carter, Carter!" said Mr. Duncan Davis, searching the old closet he called his memory. "Yes, to be sure, at Nauheim. There was a Carter there."

Pauline's face grew very eager. "You did?" she said. "Tell me about him—you quite interest me."

"To be sure," said Duncan Davis. "I knew him intimately. He was the chaplain, and had the English chapel, and—"

But some one had turned the cruel cock, and the water again grew icy cold. Duncan Davis never told more of the Nauheim chaplain.

This had been Pauline's life, and Pauline's curious purpose of general inquiry had been noted by a few gentlemen as a phase of fascinating oddity. The wives of the gentlemen—strongly intellectual in their way, and whose voices rang out at dinner sharp and clear as their lords—were pleasant on this fancy, and hinted at the supposed matrimonial end of all society.

"With so large a net, my dear," said Mrs. Winslow Jones, "she will have a salmon one of these mornings." This drawing in of her net was delightful to all assistants, for the fisherwoman's voice was so gay and so fascinating. Her talk was a sort of moderated burlesque—a softened comic exaggeration—a dressing up of light flying topics in quaint, sober, solemn language. Then her deep limpid eye flashed, the bells began to ring, and the music to play, and the voices of gay laughing revellers were heard in her throat, as though a door had been opened quickly. But when the lights were down, and the social theatre closed for the night, the deep limpid eyes grew dull, the clouds began to gather, and an old look of weary restlessness, which seemed the reflection, as in a glass, of a heavier and a yet wearier restlessness, now more than two years old, came and settled on her face. These two looks were familiar and habitual with Pauline, during this year or two. The first the world saw: the second, only that gloomy brother, now grown yet more gloomy.

In a mean street—that hung like a torn bit of ribbon from the skirt of Belgrave-square—and in a rather mean house (but which was let, as birds'-nests are sold in China, for its weight in silver), Lady Laura Fermor and her band had thrown up fresh works. Flushed with recent success, she had seen the truth that all things naturally tend to the centre and to the metropolis; and she was now operating from a sort of "pah" in town.

At pleasant chambers in St. James's-square, the special morning paper whose function it is to calculate the right ascension of the fashionable heavenly bodies, had announced that Sir Hopkins Pocock had recently arrived. The Eastern dependency had not been so skilfully manipulated as the Waipiti. With those intractable savages he had won glory; more civilised beings he had found less impressionable. He was recalled. His staff and dependents fell with him: and Sir Hopkins Pocock, C.B., returned to England, his health having broken down sadly, as we all well knew.

In Clarges-street, idlers, and neighbours who were idlers, had noticed men, like shipwrights on a ship's side, busy burnishing and scouring a model house from top to bottom; and at whose door a little later, great wains were seen disgorging furniture from their dark jaws, like whales on wheels. The more curious still, four days later, that there was a tall, grim, stiff gentleman, whose name was Carlay, in possession, and who was expecting home his married daughter and her husband, who were to live with him.

These are the little strands which are to make the piece. The weaving may now begin.

CHAPTER V. A VISIT.

DURING these days there was often sitting in Pauline's drawing-room, and almost at Pauline's feet, the chair was so very low, the gauntly handsome Mr. Romaine who was of her party at the French play. He was one of the travellers whom she had sent for, and who had been contemptuously turned away with the rest, when it was found that there was no profit in him; but he had declined to accept that furlough. It suited him to stay. His cheeks were well scorched, even to a hard red; his cheek-bones were high and glossy; there was much of his neck seen; he had shiny eyes in deep ambuscade, and a glossy overhanging moustache. Yet he was tall, manly, gaunt, *alive*, and, when he chose, soft as a woman. He was one of those men who put up a dozen guns for luggage, and go and range among the poor wild beasts, who no doubt wonder what manner of wild beasts these are that come to their forests to scatter fire and smoke, and the sharp report, and the smashing stroke, and the cruel agony. He had gone among odd tribes—blacks and greys, and red-coloured—and received the freedom of their wigwams, and had been offered wives in profusion, and had written very agreeable narratives of his adven-

ture of Ulalumai; or, the Tawney River. The Great Circulator took five hundred copies.

He was not married, and never would marry; but liked to scoff and gird at women with politeness; sitting at their feet (on these low chairs) telling, too, of his rough sports—a sort of Othello in outline. To hear these matters *they* did seriously incline. There had been a lady whom he called Virginia Grammont, whom he loved to entertain in this fashion, on whose low chair he sat, whom he taught, scolded, carped at, complimented, sneered at, but regarded in some sort as his own special property. That hour of ten every second day, he took her as regularly as he would his cigar, or dinner. She was a sort of book, more a pamphlet he would have said, for him. He *required* her.

She of course was of the gay young condottieri, who scour the ball-rooms. Here making war for “an idea” does not obtain, and *could* not obtain. For, speaking metaphorically, how are horses and forage, and caparisons and accoutrements, and subsistence, to be found on such terms? Suddenly one day she became a Mrs. Massinger. Mr. Romaine was thrust with a shock from the low chair.

He was in a fury. He raged as if some personal injury had been done to him. He would have liked to have gone out with a rifle and shot Massinger like a panther. But Mr. and Mrs. Massinger were away, going to spend the winter at Rome. He now discovered that he loved this girl. The gaunt face glowed with colour, the man, who had seen savage women until he had begun to think the whole sex pure cattle, was in sore distress.

He had begun to know Pauline about this time. She laughed openly at his troubles: fanciful, she called them. He did not much care how she received them; all he wanted was some one to make company while he talked, and sometimes “honed” himself, and more often sprang from the low chair, and tramped heavily up and down with long strides on her carpet. She bore with him patiently, and often without speaking, sometimes throwing on fuel, as it were a log of wood, quietly.

“This is all your own pride, which has been touched,” she would say. On this he would stop his striding, pulling himself up, as if he were a strong horse, and would begin champing his bit impatiently, and pawing the carpet, fixing on her a strange half fierce look from his bright eyes. Then he launched into harangues, half invective and half expostulation. This was one pattern of many such scenes. It fell in with his daily life, and about every second or third afternoon a huge rough poncho of his was lying on the hall table, and the heavy hollow beat of his stride was heard on the floor overhead.

The house in Alfred-place had a balcony, which was a perfect garden. From the top of the street was seen what looked like a flower-bed in the air—luxuriant greenery, langing and clustering, with large bright patch of rich red, so that

strangers and passers-by often turned down the street to get a nearer view. A yet brighter patch of colour attracted them when the face of the mistress was seen bent down over her flowers. Not that she fancied gardening, but as she once said in her odd way to Lord Puttenham, who had protested that his gardener should send up a box of rare cuttings and roots from Puttenham: “She liked flowers, because they were *sure* to die.”

Thus was she, one evening about four o'clock, bent down over the balcony, pulling away a living leaf as often as a dead one. The little street was deserted, never at any time having much traffic. Two figures had walked past the top—two girls as they seemed—who were caught by the bright flash in the balcony, the gorgeous reds—and came down slowly to see better. As they came under, they looked up with women's delight in flowers, and Miss Manuel, who did not care to look at any faces, could not help seeing the upturned ones through the green leaves.

In a second she had flown back into her room, and rang the bell. “Ask that lady to come in,” she said to her servant. “Bring her in; and, if she refuses, call to me.” The servant bowed, and Pauline, shooting a glance round her room, said aloud, “Ah! they are come at last, and it is full time to begin.”

It was a lady and her maid that were admiring the flowers. The servant did his office so gravely, discreetly, and impressively, that the lady hovered timorously on the steps. There was a mesmeric influence of cold respect about his sad sphinx eyes which seemed to draw the young Mrs. Fermor inside the open door.

“I am afraid,” she said, “that is—really I don't know the lady—”

“She is waiting, ma'am, for you in the drawing-room,” said the menial of the stony eyes; and then there came a melodious voice from the stairs, and the figure of Pauline glided towards her. She brought her in, and the cold-eyed closed the door as though he had been a jailer. From this afternoon it all began.

Young Mrs. Fermor hardly recovered; and, still timorous, made as though she would go away again. “You remember that night at the play?” said Pauline, leading her into the drawing-room, as though it had been a strong-room. “Of course you forget my face. I do not forget yours. The moment I saw you in the box I had a sort of instinct who it was. You must know me. And I want you to like me.”

The young girl recollected that theatre very well, and when she was looking up admiring the flowers, also recollected the face she had seen through the leaves. She was of a calm temper; soft and gentle as she was, and not likely to be flurried into speechless confusion as hapless Violet would have been. She looked at Pauline for a moment, and said:

“After a time I shall try. I have only seen you once, recollect, and that for a moment.”

Pauline smiled. "You have seen more of the world than I have. I wish I had that wise caution. Sit down, won't you, and let us talk? Or first, let me apologise," added Pauline, dropping her eyes humbly, "for thus violently carrying you into the house. You have a hundred things to do, I am sure. And now that I have seen you and spoken to you——"

A hundred feelings were working in Mrs. Fermor's mind. She recollected the night at the Grand Hotel, and she had accepted her husband's forgetfulness of the lady as though it were truth; but this had not passed out of her mind. It had only been packed up carefully and put by. That little compliment about knowing the world better than the grand, flashing creature before her, had some little sweetness—there was curiosity to know more, to discover more; and so she did not rise to go away.

"We *ought* to know each other well," said Pauline, after a pause; "after all that has happened. It is so curious, our sitting this way together, we two—of all people in the world. There are some—pray forgive me—who could not bear to look at you."

Young Mrs. Fermor smiled. She was thinking that winners should be gracious always, and could afford to hear much.

"I don't know what to say," she said; "these things *will* come about."

"Of course," said the other; "of course. Well, you are tired of our story and our woes. He has told you of it over and over again—every minute detail—until you are sick of the whole business. He has described everything to you over and over again."

The girl coloured. "No, indeed," she said; "I had no curiosity. I never asked him."

"Never told you!" said Pauline. "I should have thought it had been the one subject of his mind. It should have been burnt into his brain. I should fancy its haunting him like a nightmare. *You* would fancy so, too! Naturally so, only that the subject would not be so welcome to a young wife. You have fitted up your skeleton-closet already, my dear child. No matter. It does as well as other furniture. You are very happy, of course—while that poor darling—you will say at least hers, my sister's, was a very cruel fate."

"Why," said young Mrs. Fermor, "is *she* not happy?"

Pauline looked at her. "Why do you take the trouble of acting with me?"

"I protest," said the other, warmly, "I know nothing—and have heard nothing. Was not her marriage happy?"

Pauline started, gave a half cry. "Marriage! What marriage? Ah, she *was* to have been married. Ah! now I see. They have not told you anything. He thought it was better not, as it was only one of the old pathetic romantic stories."

Mrs. Fermor was troubled; she looked wondering and timorous at Pauline.

"She died," the latter went on—speaking fast, "poor sweet child; foolishly, I think. Some would have lived on through everything; *she* was only a child, and the idea of being deserted wore her out of life."

"Deserted!" said the other, starting up. "No. Why, I was told——"

"O, of course," said Pauline, her cheeks glowing; "these were too ugly ideas to be introduced to a young bride! Ah! and yet it was a cruel, cruel story."

Young Mrs. Fermor, greatly shocked, could only say, "I never heard, indeed I did not. O, this is dreadful; poor, poor child. I am so grieved."

Pauline looked at her half scornfully.

"That should be all over now, and time should have healed—what's the phrase? Yes, Mrs. Fermor, death had to be called in to make a place for *you*. In some of the long nights, get Captain Fermor to tell you all the details. By-and-by, you will discover other secrets which he has not yet told you. But all in good time."

Young Mrs. Fermor was all confused, almost overwhelmed by this news, and looked at her helplessly. Just then the door opened sharply, and a heavy figure swung in. It was the Mr. Romaine, who was so handsomely gaunt.

CHAPTER VI. MR. ROMAINE.

His tread became heavy, as he saw there was some one else present. He flung himself with open ill humour on to a seat, casting a look of impatience at the lady in shawl and bonnet, who was so perversely in the way.

"This is Mrs. Fermor; don't you remember, Mr. Romaine? You were introduced before; for shame! You should send and have your memory cleaned and oiled."

Romaine looked at her angrily; pushed the low chair back.

"I want to recollect as little as I can, as you know," he said, bluntly; "I am sick of remembering. I wish the whole machine was worn out."

"You have been in France——" said Pauline. "Yet no Frenchman would have made such a speech."

"Frenchman!" he said, with contempt. "I mean no offence to your visitor, and if any one is offended, I am sure I am ready to apologise. But I say still, thank God I am not a Frenchman. Better the lowest English boor before that!"

He thus artfully escaped a special acquaintance with the visitor, keeping her under the general category of "a lady." Young Mrs. Fermor—not yet recovered from the strange things she had been hearing; and this wonder mixed itself with yet another wonder at this strange person, also with a little pique at his rudeness—said, softly, "I am not the least offended. I must say a word, though, for our low English boors; I have always found *them* polite."

She said this very naturally, and perhaps

meant nothing special, after all. Pauline smiled. Romaine looked at Mrs. Fermor fixedly for a moment.

"Out of the mouths of babes, you know," said Pauline; "rather it is not likely you *should* know. Take care."

He said nothing, but got up and began to pace. "I hear, after all," he said, "they will not go to Rome. That fellow has listened to reason at last."

"To the doctors?" said Pauline.

"To *reason*, I said!" he replied, stopping suddenly before them, laughing grimly. "Poor Virginia's chest is made of gauze; a Roman winter for *her*—God help her, when it all begins so wisely as *that*, how will it go on?"

"O, very well," said Pauline, calmly; "he will make a very good serviceable creature; kind and thoughtful, better than a hundred of your showy theatrical men, who wish marriage to be *all* husband."

Young Mrs. Fermor sighed deeply, and even loudly. Pauline's eyes floated round significantly to Mr. Romaine's eyes. That sigh saved ten minutes' explanation afterwards. Then Mrs. Fermor rose to go. She bowed with a timidity not unacceptable to him, who returned it with a gracious ungraciousness. Pauline went out with her.

"You must excuse him," she said; "he is in an odd state at present, and we have all to humour him. A girl he liked has just married, and he is suffering, poor soul. Shall we see each other soon? I want you to love me. I do indeed. I live in the solitude of the world. I have no one to care for me since my poor darling was taken from me. You *know* it was hard, since she was not to go with him, that she could not have stayed with us. Won't you love me?"

Mrs. Fermor saw her eyes glistening. She was conqueror, and could be generous. Pressing her hand, she said, "Indeed I will."

Coming back to her drawing-room, Pauline found the steady pacing going on.

"You seem to have a good deal to say at the door there," he said. "Is the lobby to become the drawing-room?"

Pauline laughed. "How intolerant!" she said; "intolerant even of a simple girl like that."

"Simple, indeed," he said, still pacing. "Who is she, pray?"

"I should tell you nothing," said Pauline; "you had a field for yourself, and one of these Frenchmen you despise so, would have shone. However, you confounded her, I think—I suppose she had not seen so wild a being in her life."

"Folly," he said, roughly. "Simple enough, though. Who is she?"

"A married girl. This is her third moon."

"I remember the husband now—a stick, and a conceited stick. A stick I should like to break across my knee."

"She is a half school-girl," said Pauline, "full of wonder and admiration for anything won-

derful or admirable. One of the true worshipping souls—the rarest kind of this sort of virtue."

He stopped pacing. "I have given up collecting," he said.

"The marriage, I suspect," continued Pauline, opening and shutting a fan, "will not be the happiest. He is fine and vain. He is *de par amours*, as the old French romancers say; his head is turned with conquest. There was a poor girl—No matter."

There was scorn in Mr. Romaine's face. He was intolerant. "I knew he was a stick," he said. "I took his measure for a prig at the first glance."

"There," said Pauline, laughing, "make her one of your vestals. She is actually made to worship. Don't you see devotion in her eye, poor soft child? There are many weary moments in the day, you know, hard to fill up."

Thus Miss Manuel and Mr. Romaine talked until the lamp was brought in. Then the Bishop of Leighton Buzzard came in, bringing with him those finely-turned ebony legs; and, after the bishop, the pleasant reviewer; and, after him, the general company. A crowd of faces—many false, many indifferent; but, by-and-by, appeared among them one *true* one—that of Young Brett.

An officer-child or an officer-boy in that company would have been wholly irrelevant. He would have fallen upon evil days, and have been stoned—that is to say, politely jeered out of the place. But Pauline honoured and even loved that faithful young soldier.

"No one must touch my terrier," she said.

For him there was a happy smile. She was glad when she saw his figure. His ready service—his faithful devotion in old cruel days, now happily far off, were not to be forgotten. Indeed, his true and simple devotion had been made manifest in a hundred kind and useful ways; and, so long as he had stayed at Eastport, he had watched tenderly over that quiet marble slab which rested over poor Violet. When the regiment moved, which it did in about a year, Pauline, returning home, discovered that he had privately salaried an assistant in a nursery-garden to look after weeds, and do such little gardening as would be wanting.

But, in that mixed company, his own merits soon exempted him from any protection. This day he came and was welcomed by Pauline, who had not seen him for a fortnight. He sat down beside her. "Do you remember your wondering," he said, "what had become of that man at Eastport—that Major Carter?"

Pauline's eyes flashed.

"Yes—yes," she said hastily; "what have you heard?"

"I saw him to-day," said Young Brett. "I never liked him. But I went up and spoke to him. I found out all about him."

"Yes?" said Pauline, with great interest; "go on. You are the most useful friend I have."

"Nonsense, Miss Manuel," said he, colouring under this praise; "you will spoil me. He has been abroad. Some little town in France. He is in mourning, and has lost his wife; in great grief, I suppose."

"And is he going back to France?" said Pauline, eagerly.

"Dear no!" he said; "has just taken a house; he told me his address; asked about you."

"He *did*?" said Pauline, with compressed lips.

"O yes," said Young Brett; "and soon after we parted at the corner of Pall-Mall. I was going to the club, and he went to the Irrefragable Insurance Company."

"Insurance company!" said Pauline; "why, what for?"

"I don't know," said Young Brett, in a little distress at not having made this out; "but I could ask, you know—find out—"

"No, no," said Pauline; "it is nothing. Thanks. You are always good to me, and useful. Now, hand the bishop his tea."

And to the bishop, whose turned ebony limbs lay over each other like two miniature gymnastic clubs reposing in a corner, he hurried over, eagerly bearing a cup of tea.

HIS SABLE MAJESTY'S CUSTOMS.

THREE or four years ago that seasoned traveller in strange lands, African and Asiatic, Captain Richard F. Burton, offered to revisit Abomey, or, as he spells it, Agbome, the capital of Dahomey, or, as he spells it, Dahome. About two years ago Commodore Wilmot, R.N., in command of her Majesty's naval forces on the African coast, with Captain Luce and Dr. Haran, did pay a visit to Abomey, and were well received at the negro court of the slave coast, infamous for the human sacrifices at its bloody "customs." Friendly understanding of some sort was then established; the necessity of finding for Dahomey some lawful source of industry and wealth to replace the slave trade was discussed with King Gelele; the king offered to encourage any settlement of English traders at Whydah, and expected to be visited again, and to receive divers presents from the English government, including a carriage and horses that he had particularly asked for. Commodore Wilmot did not repeat his visit, but the British government, half a year later, commissioned Captain Burton (who desired the expedition, and as consul at Fernando Po was living within five hundred miles of the King of Dahomey's port of Whydah) to go and do what he could. If any civilised ideas had fallen as good seed upon very thin soil at the court of Abomey, he might encourage their growth; chiefly he was to aid in the discouragement of the slave-trade, and do anything that it might be possible to do in mitigation of the barbarous "customs." He was supplied with presents from England for the King of Dahomey—a silk damask tent and pole,

a coat of mail and gauntlets, two embossed silver belts, a silver embossed pipe, two silver-gilt waiters, and other articles precious to savage eyes.

It was a year ago, on the twenty-ninth of November, last year, that Captain Burton left Fernando Po upon this mission, which gave him the three months in Dahomey, whereof he has since told the story in the amusing book from which we describe his experiences. Anchoring off Whydah on the fifth of December, her Majesty's Commissioner to Dahomey landed ceremoniously amid song and shout, to be met on the shore by the Reverend Peter W. Bernasko, native teacher and principal of the Wesleyan Mission at Whydah, and by an escort of twenty men, who led the way from the shore to the town, shouting, firing, singing, and dancing, and stopping to exchange West African courtesies with every "captain" of a village by the way. A kruman marched in front of the landing party, carrying the white and red crossed flag of St. George, followed by five hammocks, with an interpreter and six armed krumen from the ships, brilliant in barges, red nightcaps, and gay pocket-handkerchiefs. By the lagoon and custom-house the march inward to the town of Whydah is over a couple of miles of the swamps and sandy hillocks of the false coast, by a road which the slave-dealers keep bad for better discouragement of intruders. In Whydah, after the ceremonies of entrance, the new comers dismounted at the English fort, and refreshed themselves, as well as the crowd of visitors, the musket firing, and return cannonading, would permit, in the trellised arbour that forms the centre of each European enclosure. Next day there were more ceremonies, with exchange of gifts.

In Whydah, the head-quarters of the demoralising slave-trade, where almost every man is a rascal, crimes of violence are rare. The town is a group of villages divided into five quarters, each under its own cabboceer, and with a vice-roy over all. Its streets, which are mere continuations of the bush-paths lined by the outwardly ruinous walls of the compounds and the windowless backs of the houses, are very quiet of nights, and in charge of constables, who squat in pairs, and rise suddenly to flash their torches in the face of any wayfarer. If he be a stranger who has lost his way, they courteously conduct him to his quarters. At times, the chief of the police goes round and lays his stick upon the backs of all his subordinates who are caught napping.

Whydah is a paradise for the pre-Raphaelite colonist. It has a milky blue sky, verdigris-green grass, and a bright-red clay soil. It stands about a mile and a half in direct line from the sea, parted from it by a broad leek-green swamp, a narrow lagoon, and a high sand-bank tufted with palms and palmyras of a deep green approaching to black, over which only the masts of shipping are to be seen shooting up above the houses. The town is about two miles and a half long by a mile broad, picturesque when

seen from without, but within squalid and decaying. Except round the chief market-place, the houses, with walls not more than seven or eight feet high, built of the red clay, are scattered; sometimes an enclosure of acres belongs to a single property, and there is altogether far more bush than building. Fires are common, and after a great fire almost every house is girt with a fetish charm of dead leaves hanging at wide intervals from a country rope. Before the gates also of many a house is set up a scarecrow, the *Vo-sisa*, to drive away the evil spirits, who are supposed to mistake for a terrible man a pole with an empty calabash on it to imitate a head and a body of grass thatch, palm-leaves, fowls' feathers, and shells. Near almost every door stands also the *Legba-pot*, or *Devil's Dish*, supplied daily with food, eaten by the vulture or turkey-bustard, the Dahomey scavenger, whose life is sacred, and who presumes much on the fact. There used to be in the environs fine cultivated farms, now there are none, but only marshes, palm-orchards, and neglected clumps of wood. The population of the town, which has decayed with the fortunes of the slave-trade, is also diminishing. It has been estimated by the French mission to be no more than twelve thousand, and even this number is reduced by one-half in time of war.

There are in Whydah four European forts, or factories; in order of seniority, French, Brazilian, English, and Portuguese; there used to be a Dutch and a Prussian factory, but they have long since disappeared. The English fort is now tenanted by the Wesleyan mission, established rather more than twenty years ago, by Mr. T. B. Freeman and his companion, Mr. Dawson. Ten years ago they were followed by the Reverend Mr. Bernasko, the present principal, and sole master of the fort, where he has a congregation of a dozen coloured men and a school of nearly fifty pupils. Mr. Bernasko, with small pay and many living at his charge, is obliged to feed his mission from the produce of a store for the sale of cloth and pottery, rum and ammunition, within a few yards of his chapel.

The native religion sets up horrible clay images of *Legbo*, and has, in a little round hut of mud, whitewashed inside and out, with an extinguisher-shaped thatch for its roof, an establishment of sacred snakes, of a kind some ten feet long, and not poisonous. On the other side of the road their devotees sit upon tree-roots, and watch over them. Here also are fetish schools, where any child touched by the snake must be taken for a year from its parents, and, at their expense, taught the songs and dances proper to snake-worship. To kill a snake of the sacred sort in Dahomey, even by accident, used to be death to the killer; now he is put into a hole under a hut of dry fagots, thatched with grass that has been well greased with palm-oil. Fire is set to the hut, and through the fire he must rush up to make his way to the nearest running water, followed by the serpent priests, who beat him mercilessly

with sticks and pelt him with clods. Thus he suffers by fire and water, besides running the gauntlet.

Many have died under this ordeal, but the founder in Whydah of the De Souza family saved many a victim, by stationing a number of his slaves round him, with orders to give him, as he ran, only the semblance of a beating, while they stood in the way of the sticks of the merciless. Serpent-worship is a religion of the coast. When the Dahomans conquered Whydah, they did so in defiance of the fetish power of a sacred snake that had been left to defend alone the passage of a marsh that could have been held well enough by a few fighting men. Yet liberty to persist in their snake-worship almost reconciled the Whydahs to the stern Dahoman rule.

The De Souza just mentioned was a peasant, who left Rio Janeiro more than half a century ago, to see the world. He became in Whydah governor of the Portuguese fort, and about the year 'forty-three was raised to the native dignity of *chaca*, or principal agent for commerce, between the king and all strangers. As this captain of the merchants could admit or exclude what articles he chose, and had the regulation of the excise, his power of enriching himself was considerable, and he used it without scruple. But, as we have seen, though a publican and a slave-trader, he was of kindly temper, discouraging torture, and steadily refused to be present at any human sacrifice. When advanced in life, he had the Prince de Joinville for a guest, and he died in the year 'forty-nine, leaving a hundred children to contest the succession to his dignity of *chaca*. The family is still numerous, quarrelsome, and influential in Dahomey.

When Captain Burton was on the point of advancing to the capital, there arrived at Whydah, with credentials in the form of a "shark-stick" and a "lion-stick" (tomahawks with shark and lion ornaments), two of the King of Dahomey's eunuchs, with names signifying *Here-brave-here* and *Cannot-get-such-a-son-to-be-born*. The arrival of these messengers with their retinue enforced three days' delay for a palaver, but on the thirteenth of December the start was made. Captain Burton went in company with Mr. Bernasko and his son Tom, a small boy of eleven, who already spoke half a dozen of the coast dialects. Other personages of the procession were Tom's *kla*, or confidential negro, an amusing imp aged ten, who did not look more than half that age; two interpreters; various catechumens, and the six slave boys whom the King of Dahomey allowed Mr. Bernasko to convert at Whydah; a coloured tailor and barber, who called himself the ensign, and carried the flag of St. George; a spy; a Popo rascal; a cook; and the usual tail of hungry followers. One of the interpreters was John Mark, son of Mark Lemon, whom Commander Forbes describes as a "perfect Dahoman, too big a fool to be a rogue," and the great-grandson of an English corporal. The other was Mr. Beccham,

a slave given to the Wesleyan Mission, and sent for education to Cape Coast Castle, where he had introduced himself as "Prince Bah." For an offence in Dahomey he had suffered three days' imprisonment, and was cowed for life by the horror of the heavy chains, the handful of grain, the cup of dirty water once a day, and the nights on the hard floor, where he was bitten by the iwe worm, which, in dread of a terrible bastinado, he did not dare to kill. "He used to weep with fear if ordered to go anywhere, or to say anything, from which his vivid fancy could distil danger, and nothing but the strongest drink, constantly adhibited, carried him through his trials."

So the procession set out through the misty morning air, the six hammocks, including those of the interpreters and of the sharp boy Tom, being preceded by a youth bearing the king's cane and a hide-whip wherewith to clear the way by driving all the carriers into the bush. The traveller's hammock in Dahomey is supported rather on the heads than on the shoulders of the short-necked negroes. An old traveller complained of being "trussed in a bag and tossed on negroes' heads;" but the chief objection is to the brittleness of a pegged bamboo, which is part of the structure; because, when that gives way as it often does, the traveller is suddenly shot head first to the ground. Comes down, in hunting phrase, "a cropper;" or, in the language of the lecturer, gets a bad fall on his occiput.

The way is, by maize-fields and a scattered line of the lofty bombax (related to the baobab of Senegal) and umbrella trees backing the town, over a fair open rolling plain, where the tall guinea-grass is being burnt down before the dry season sowing, and the bright leek-green of the growing herbage stands out gaudily from the black charred stems and the red loam of the ground. The road is ten or twelve feet wide, sandy, well cleared, and thronged with carriers in Indian file, mostly women, bearing huge loads lashed to their baskets. The women in Dahomey are rather of stronger build and larger size than the men, and, as everybody knows, take their part in the service of their king and country, not only as labourers but also as soldiers. Yet, oddly enough, in that character they say they have become men, and themselves stigmatise a coward as a woman.

The monotony of the plain country is relieved by clumps and groves of palm-trees, stunted where they grow singly, but in the bush rising to a great height in search of air and sun. Or the cocoa and the oil-palm are found scattered like trees in an English orchard, the oil-palms being numbered with a view to revenue. The line of the Agbana water, a foul swamp, is marked by a jungle strip, two hundred yards broad, of bombax and broad-leaved figs. Here the smell of the hardly eatable wild mango mingles with many a baser savour. Over the marsh runs the road, and up another wave of ground, with a little village on the summit half-buried in the plantain-bush, down into a copse where water runs during the

rains; up again to level ground, and the grey thatches and mat huts of Savi among small plantations of maize and cassava, with mangoes, plantains, a few cocoa-nuts, oranges, the African apple growing almost wild, and orchards of well-trimmed oil-palms. At Savi there is a halt for the cabocceer's greetings of drumming, dancing, and taboring, drinking of water, and stronger followings, and gifts of food.

Savi once was the capital of Whydah, and had a king able to reward Captain Challoner Ogle with a half-hundred-weight of gold dust for taking and hanging the pirate Roberts in his ship the Royal Fortune.

From Savi towards Ardra, which Captain Burton writes Allada, there is descent again, and in the hollow is the Nyinsin Swamp, which flows, after rains, out of, and again into, the Whydah lagoon. December not being the rainy season, Captain Burton found this swamp a hundred and fifty feet broad, and waist deep with water dark as coffee-grounds, stagnant, over mud into which the porters sank to mid-calf. A road of tree-trunks helped the men over the deepest part. On the banks of the swamp grew ferns and shrubs. This is the swamp that the Whydah people neglected to defend otherwise than by setting up a fetish snake on their side of it when, in seventeen 'twenty-seven, Savi and Whydah were invaded and made part of the kingdom of Dahomey.

On the other side of the swamp the country rises again, and the next wooded descent in the series of undulations is to the Poli Water, beyond which there is a regular ascent of steps to Poli, which is mainly a large market, and stands at the head of the plateau, with a fine view of the fall of land to the south. Here there was lodging for the night, and merry-making, dancing, gin-drinking, drumming, firing of powder.

At sunrise next morning the journey onward was continued down a beautiful narrow path between foliage of tree and fence to the little market-place of Azohwe. Thence, after breakfasting, the way was through a lane of shrubbery with the brightest flowers, red and blue, pink and yellow, with here and there a queenly white lily, to long flats and well-wooded ascents that led to a large grass clearing, patched here and there with palms, bark, and forest; so into Ardra, or Allada, through the maize plantations, and by the detached houses of the suburb to the great square, a copy in small of the great square of Abomey, with a double-storied palace of red clay, having five shuttered windows over the royal gateway. In compliment to this royal abode the procession was carried with much noise thrice round the square.

The tradition of Allada accounts for the name and origin of the kingdom of Dahomey. Nearly two hundred and fifty years ago an old king of Allada died and left three sons. The eldest reigned in his father's place. The second son went away, and founded Hwebonu, since known by us as Little Ardra and Porto Novo. But Dako, the youngest brother, went north and settled at

a place between Kana and Abomey, with permission of the local chief. There Dako became powerful, and encroached on the grounds of a neighbouring chief named Dauh or Da, the snake or rainbow. He exacted from his weaker neighbour more and more of his land, till at last Da cried, "Soon thou wilt build in my belly." And in good time Dako really killed the king, and built over his body the old palace, which he called "Da-homey," "the House in Da's belly;" he meaning the belly in the Ffon tongue, and he me "in the belly." Hereupon the Ffons changed their name to Dahomans, and it was thus, they say, that about the year sixteen hundred and twenty-five, the kingdom of Dahomey came into existence.

"Ardra, or Allada," says Captain Burton, "is the Tours, or Sienna of Dahomey, where the purest Ffon is spoken." At Abomey the aspirates and gutturals are exaggerated, the effect, perhaps, of a colder climate and a more rugged land. Whydah, on the contrary, unduly softens the articulation; as in Egypt, this may be attributed to the damp heat, and consequent languor of the seaboard. At the port town the language is a debased European jargon.

From Ardra, on the sixteenth of December, the party journeyed on to Agrime, seeing finer maize crops than are grown nearer the sea, on a cleared and open highway, through grass, bush, and jungle. Two warriors only appeared as dancers of welcome at the very little market and village entitled Henvi of the Hand-clapping, because there the conqueror of Whydah, when on his way clapped his hands in token of grief, and marched on, refusing to delay his expedition for his mother's funeral. A mile further on is Henvi, or Hawee, with its tattered palace, and its fetish house. At the gateway of the royal house the Dahomey Amazons were first seen, four of them joining in the usual congratulatory dance. An hour's journey further led to Whegbo, where there was more dancing of welcome under fig and fetich trees, and cutting off imaginary heads in the course of the dance, with a boast that next month the valiant dancers would cut off real heads in Abbeokuta. Two hours' march from Whegbo, is Akpwe, at the southern end of the Great Swamp. Here there were tumble-down remains of a royal palace, the poorest of markets, and a thin population, showing a dozen women and children to each man. This in Dahomey is the common condition of the population near the capital.

The Great Swamp, which Captain Burton names the Agrime Swamp, was once the northern boundary between the old kingdom of Allada and the original Dahomey. From December to June it may be crossed in two or three hours; between July and November, visitors to the king have spent two days of continuous toil with ten hammock men up to their armpits in water, and up to their calves in mire, perpetually tripping over the network of tree-roots, that catch their feet. Captain Burton found the swamp unusually dry, and the only feter in the bush was that of the large black ant, "which sug-

gests that a corpse is hidden behind every tree."

The road was now crowded with porters hastening up to the "Customs." At Wondonun, the half-way house, there was the usual dancing to be endured; another hour's march brought the party to the thatched village of Aiveji, almost buried in dense verdure, where there was again drinking and dancing. Hence they pushed into Agrime, where strangers, when the king is in country quarters at Kana, halt and send forward their message canes, requesting permission to advance. The whole district thus traversed shows that the land was at no distant period well cleared, but that it has been running to ruin since the Dahomans were demoralised by slave-hunts, and long predatory wars.

The land is said to be still easy to reclaim, though in time the fallows will be again afforested. The country has a ruined aspect, scanty of population, and luxuriantly wild. The subjects of Dahomey are not allowed to cultivate around Whydah coffee or sugar-cane, rice or tobacco. They are everywhere forbidden to grow ground-nuts, except for domestic purposes. A cabboceer, or local chief, may not alter his house, wear European shoes, employ a spittoon-holder, carry an umbrella without leave, spread on his bed a counterpane, mount a hammock, or use a chair in his own house. The common public of Abomey may not whitewash the inside of their houses, or close them with wooden doors. Dahomey is eaten up with ceremonial. Our gold sticks in waiting ought to be apprenticed to the negro king, for no imperial or royal court in Europe can compete with the court of Dahomey in abundance and punctiliousness of ceremony. The negroes, Captain Burton thinks, have little to do but amuse themselves with inventing and observing ceremonies, and it is for that reason they do little else. The ceremonies of the royal messenger to the European visitors halting at Agrime preceded the march to Kana, where his Dahoman majesty was to be seen. Kana, an unwall'd scatter of huts and houses, thickening, as usual, around the palace and market-place, and straggling over some three miles of space, lies upon pleasant ground, that suggested to our traveller "a vast pleasure-ground, not unlike some part of the Great Park at Windsor," on the other side of a deep valley stretching east and west. Kana was entered by bright moonlight, between crowds of spectators (from a thin population of about four thousand), occupying all the open places.

Captain Burton details at great length the ceremonies of reception, but even the rich colouring of tropical barbarism cannot make a detail of mere ceremonial otherwise than tedious. An old card-table, stripped of its green baize and of much of its veneer, was paraded in procession with the royal gin and wine; companies and great dignitaries marched past; soldiers danced and fired; eight skulls were paraded upon wooden platters carried on the top of very tall poles; musical warriors, dressed in rich silks,

formed line opposite her Britannic Majesty's commissioner, and sang :

Burton (pronounced Batunu) he hath seen all the world with its kings and cabboceers :
He now cometh to see Dahomey, and he shall see everything here.

In the king's presence, where he sits in the deep shade of a sort of barn-gate, there is a circle of white sand for those who approach to rub their faces in. His Majesty King Gelele, son of King Gezo, by a northern slave girl or a mulatto from the French factory at Whydah, is over six feet tall, well made, except the cucumber-shaped shin, and several shades lighter than his courtiers. He is about forty-five years old, slightly bald, with peppercorn hair generally close shaven, scanty eyebrows, thin beard, thinner moustaches, a square jaw, red bleared eyes, and a turned-up nose, "looking, in fact, as if all the lines had been turned the wrong way," but not much flattened, and not wholly without a bridge. He is strongly pock-marked, and has the Dahoman mark in three short parallel and perpendicular lancet cuts between the scalp and the eyebrows. He dresses simply, is often bareheaded, wears a single human tooth and blue bead attached to a thread as neck ornament and Bo-fetish against sickness, prefers iron to silver arm-rings, wore at Kana a white body-cloth of plain fine stuff with a narrow edging of watered green silk, over drawers of purple-flowered silk that hardly reached to mid thigh. His Moslem sandals were of gold-embroidered scarlet, and he smoked detestable tobacco.

A throng of royal spouses stood behind to wipe off instantly any drop of perspiration from the royal face, to hold the spittoon immediately when the royal mouth indicated a nascent disposition to spit, and all ready to rub the ground with their foreheads whenever his Majesty sneezed. When his Majesty drinks, no vulgar eye must see him do anything so ignoble; he wheels suddenly round to them, with his back to the court; the wives hide him from view with umbrellas; drums beat; distracting noises of all sorts are made, and all heads are averted, or the courtiers, if standing, dance like bears, or paddle their hands like the fore feet of a swimming dog. Amongst some tribes in the Congo country the chief's big toes are pulled when he drinks. Protected and not choked by all such ceremonial, a king of Dahomey is a long-lived animal. Eight successive kings of the present dynasty have occupied the throne during two hundred and fifty-two years. "Thus," says Captain Burton, "rivaling the seven Roman monarchs whose rule extended over nearly the same period, and had caused them to be held fabulous or typical."

The flower of the host brought forward to grace this reception was the mixed company of about two hundred young Amazons lately raised by the king. The whole court did not show a gathering of more than a thousand. Some, however, were away, attacking a village; all

who were there expressed in oration, and song, and shout, and dance, determination to deal terribly with the Abeokutans, against whom a great expedition was intended. It has since turned out that the Dahomans were very seriously worsted in that expedition. Three skulls of conquered chiefs, in various typical settings, were brought out as part of the more solemn paraphernalia of Dahoman royalty. One, for example, was the skull of a neighbouring chief, who, on the death of Gezo, Gelele's father, sent word that all men were now truly joyful, that the sea had dried up, and that the world had seen the bottom of Dahomey. He was attacked and killed, and his skull, boiled beautifully white and polished, is mounted on a ship of thin brass, a foot long. There is always water enough in Dahomey to float it with the mocker's skull for freight, is the grim jest intended. These skulls are without the lower jaw. The lower jaw of an enemy is prized in Dahomey for umbrellas, sword-handles, and other purposes. It is cut and torn with horrible cruelty out of the face of the still living victim.

In the presence of his Majesty the highest courtiers of Dahomey lie on their sides, and at times roll over on their bellies, or relieve themselves by standing on all fours. The king speaks to his subjects through an official, called the *Meu*, to whom his word is carried on all fours by a ceremonious middle-aged lady, called the *Dakoo*; she comes back also on all fours with any answer that may be intended for the royal ear.

Through the garden of Dahomey, Captain Burton and his party presently marched on from Kana to the capital, Abomey, or Agbome, a town with gates—from which it has its name—and without walls. The great square of Abomey looks like an assemblage of farm-yards, with a dozen long thatched barns; in fact, barracks for soldiery. The king entered his capital next day, and at Agbome, Captain Burton now resided for two months, including the period of the king's "So-sin Custom."

The word "custom" is used to mean the cost or charges paid to the king at a certain season of the year. The Grand Customs, which are more bloody than the annual rites, are performed only after the death of a king, and deferred by his successor until he is able to go through them with what he thinks to be due splendour. The Grand Customs of the present king in honour of his ancestor, were celebrated in November, eighteen hundred and sixty. The Reverend Mr. Bernasko, who was then present, tells that, on his way to Abomey, he first met a man nicely dressed as a cabboceer, who was being taken to the sea, where he would be thrown in to join the two porters of the seagate to open it for his Majesty's late father to enter in and wash himself. The following passages contain the gist of this gentleman's trustworthy account of the Grand Customs, from which it will be seen that, although the King of Dahomey did not really paddle a canoe in human blood, the slaughter was yet horrible

enough to need no such extravagant exaggeration:

"Monday, July the 16th, we all went out to meet the king, to accompany him to the town; and when we had met him he bade us sit down. We then took seats. Here a man had his hands tied, and mouth barred, with a fathom of white bast wove about his loins. He pointed him out as a messenger that was going to carry private information to his father. The poor creature was taken up to the town, and was sacrificed on the tomb of his father. Another in the same position was sent up to their large market to go and tell the spirits there what he was going to do for his father. About an hour afterwards, there were brought forward again four men in the same position, with one deer, one monkey, and one turkey-buzzard. Here the poor creatures had their heads cut off, save one. One man was to go to all the markets and tell all the spirits what he was about to make for his father; the second man was to go to all the waters, and tell all the animals there, &c.; the third man was to go to all the roads, and tell the spirit-travellers, &c.; the fourth and last man was to go up to the firmament, and tell all the hosts there, &c.; the deer to go to all the forests, and tell the beasts there, &c.; the monkey to go to all the swamps, to climb up trees, and tell all the animals there; the turkey-buzzard, fortunate creature, was let loose to fly up to the sky, and tell all the birds there. After this, he got up from his throne, which was carried along with him, and drew up his sword, and said, 'As I am now a king for this kingdom, I will bring down all the enemies of my father to my footstool. I will also go down to Abbeokuta, and do to them as they once did to my father. I will sweep them up.' He was seconded by his two chief ministers, called Mingah and Mewu, who spoke to the same effect. After the speeches, we accompanied him to the town.

"Tuesday, the 17th, he beat the gong, to fix a fortnight for the commencement of the Custom. The Europeans were quite annoyed at the time fixed, but tried to bear it with patience.

"Sunday, the 29th, the Custom commenced. On the eve of the day the whole town slept at the king's gate, and got up at five o'clock in the morning to weep. And so they hypocritically did. The lamentations did not continue more than ten minutes; and, before the king came out to fire guns to give notice to all, one hundred souls had already been sacrificed, besides the same number of women killed in the inside of the palace. Ninety chief captains, one hundred and twenty princes and princesses—all these carried out separately human beings by four and two to sacrifice for the late king. About two or three of the civilised Portuguese did the same. I believe they gave twenty men to be sacrificed, besides bullocks, sheep, goats, drakes, cocks, guinea-fowls, pigeons, coral-beads, cowries, silver money, rum, &c. After these three gentlemen, the king thought all the other proper Europeans should do the same

for him, but none performed such wicked actions.

"Wednesday, the 1st of August, the king himself came out to bury his father, with the following things: Sixty men, fifty rams, fifty goats, forty cocks, drakes, cowries, &c. The men and women soldiers, well armed with muskets and blunderbusses for firing; and when he was gone round about his palace, he came to the gate and fired plenty; and there he killed fifty of the poor creatures, and saved ten.

"Tuesday, August the 16th, we were called to the king's palace, and at the gate saw ninety human heads, cut off that morning, and the poor creatures' blood flowed on the ground like a flood. The heads lay upon swish beds at each side of the gate for public view. We went in to sit down, and soon after he sent out the property of his fathers, as follows: Two chariots, one glass wheel, seven plain wheels, three solid silver dishes, two silver teapots, one silver sugar-pot, one silver butter-pot, one large cushion on a wheelbarrow drawn by six Amazons, three well-dressed silk hammocks with silk awnings.

"Three days after, we went to see the same things. I saw at the same gate sixty heads laid upon the same place; and, on three days again, thirty-six heads laid up. He made four platforms in their large market-place, on which he threw cowries and cloths to his people, and sacrificed there about sixty souls. I dare say he killed more than two thousand, because he kills men outside, to be seen by all, and women inside, privately.

"The pit at Abomey, which was reported to have been dug deep enough to contain human blood sufficient to float a canoe, was false. There were two small pits, of two feet deep and four feet in diameter each, to contain poor human blood, but not to float a canoe."

The yearly Customs of Dahomey were first heard of in Europe in the days of the Dahoman conquest of Whydah, between the years seventeen hundred and eight and seventeen 'twenty-seven. They are periodical continuations of the Grand Customs, to keep up an annual supply of fresh attendants for the deceased king in the other world. The number of victims at a Grand Custom—and the kings being long-lived, there have been only seven such Customs in two centuries and a half—Mr. Bernasko estimates, as we have seen, at two thousand; at an annual Custom they are at most eighty, and of these none but criminals are Dahoman.

There is no fixed seasons for the annual Customs, which occur in periods between slave-hunts, dignified by the name of wars. In some years they are Atto customs, from the Atto or platform whence victims are thrown; in other years So-sin, or Horse-tie customs, so named from an attendant ceremony of loosing horses before the first of the two "evil nights" on which the Amazons slay women within the palace, and the men are slain without. Captain Burton estimates the massacre at a Grand Custom as low as a thousand, but reckoning the single victims that are despatched to give in-

formation to the dead king of his sou's deeds, even when he may only have invented a new drum or received a white man's visit, the yearly sacrifices, he thinks, are altogether not less than five hundred.

LUFKIN ON DAVINGPUDGE.

WHEN me and Mrs. Lufkin left Hogsmead for a week's outing, we had no intentions of intruding into any other spear than that in which we was hitherto placed. But, as luck would have it, who should we meet at the "Farmers' Cheerful Encounter," Aldersgate-street, but my wife's cousin, that wild Tom Bowsicold, who we thought was in America!

Tom told us, just—dear fellow—in his hold hoverbearing way, that when Mrs. L. and me had done the Sowhological and the Polly Tienic, there wur but two more things for to be witnessed in London, one being a lady over the water what, every evening at nine o'clock, rode—pursued by a wulturn and a squib—upon a fiery huntameable steed (that had been in training for the same for three years), in a manner not for to be often noticed in Rotting-Row. Moreover, seeing that the lady's manty-maker every day made a pint of forgetting to bring home any other riding-habit than a narrer waistband—the interest daily increased, and the house was beseeched by multitudes who had scruples against what Tom called the "regular" drama.

As Mrs. Lufkin, in language rayther stronger than I should perhaps put up with, except on an outing, refused to have anything to do with that lady, Tom informed us that the alternative was "Sperrets."

Real sperrets. Tom Bowsicold had known them, in America, fifteen year ago, and could answer for their respectability. It seemed that there lately come over two excellent and worthy gentlemen by the name of Davingpodge, what lived in a complete hatmosphere of sperrets, and found them so difficult to manage, that they was always accompanied by three or four other gentlemen, for to help. No sooner had they arrived, than Tom Bowsicold (poor fellow, he is for ever taking care of other people's interests and neglecting of his own!) called upon the Mrs. Davingpodge, introduced them to his friends, and wrote to all the papers, except the Hogsmead Weekly Scrutineer, that they was "come." Some put in Tom's letter, some didn't, but Tom's object was gained, and the name of Davingpodge was familiar in society as a very favourite subject for disagreeing about.

"Wheer was these sperrets appearing?" asked Mrs. Lufkin, rather doubtfully.

"At Willy's his rooms," replied Tom. "But, my dear Susan, let me caution you, and Dan'l, not to apply to these philmmy and mysterious unsubstances, the terms you would naturally use in reference to Mr. Buckstone or Mr. Toole. Sperrets may avail themselves of public exhibition-rooms, without descending to the level of the stage. In order to impress this himportant

truth upon the public mind, my friends, the Mrs. Davingpodge, have, in the most disinterested manner, fixed the price of admission at one guinea, a sum which must necessarily hexclude a considerable number of truth-seekers, but ensures, on the part of them as *does* come in, a gravity and attention befitting the hoccasion."

"A guinea, Tom!" said Mrs. L., aghast.

"Twenty-one shillings," returned Tom Bowsicold, sternly. "Wheer else, let me ask, can you find a similiar exhib—phenomenon? Did any one—I put it to you both—object to paying a guinea for to see the Phossil Child—till the proprietors, finding it was nothing of the sort, liberally reduced the price to Twopence?"

Mrs. Lufkin replied that, having never heard tell of the infant in question, she could not say, but that a guinea was a guinea, that, having no particular desire to witness a "similiar" hexhibition, it did not concern *her* whether the terms was fair or not. Finally, seeing me a little disappointed, the good soul added that, if the Mrs. Davingpodge would so far recognise husband and wife as one flesh, as to accept a guinea for the two, she would consent to attend. Tom Bowsicold assuring us that he believed his personal influence could effect this arrangement, off we set, in high spirits, for Willy's his rooms.

There was a policeman standing outside who looked at us—likewise at two or three other parties as was entering—so keenly, from head to foot, that I was inclining to ask him what he meant, when Tom jerked me on, and, taking my guinea, whispered to a gent in the lobby, and passed us in.

This is exactly what we saw, and what I mean, as sure as my name's Dan'l Lufkin, to publish (if nought else will do it) in the Hogsmead Weekly Scrutineer.

It was darkish in the room. The stage, however, was well lighted, and upon it stood a thing like my wife's clothes-press, with three doors that laid open the whole front, excepting three or four inches on each side, and showed us there was nothing within but a narrer seat full of little holes that went all round, a tambourine, a fiddle, a battered post-horn, and a heap of cords. Our admission-ticket said that the audience must be expressly limited to thirty, and we found it very near the mark, for there was only forty-two. Some was walking about, some chatting together, but all very quiet, and looking oddly about, as if they wasn't quite sure whether they had got into the right place, or not. Praps they hadn't.

Mrs. L. was getting a little nervous.

"Wheer is Mrs. Davingpodge?" she whispered, tremulous, to Tom. "Among the sperrets?"

"Here at your elbow," answered Tom, coolly. "How do, Arthur?"

My wife recoiled, but Mr. Arthur Davingpodge, who seemed a nice-looking young gent who was never given enough to eat, bowed, smiled, and walked away.

A friend of the Mrs. Davingpodge then invited any gentleman that pleased to come on

the stage and inspect the "preparations." Two gents promptly accepted. One of these looked to be a most respectable elderly householder, with the highest shoulders, the longest nose, and the closest eyes I ever see together; a sharp hand, I'll be bound. He peeped about him with such an air of not having been there before, that I began to think he *had*. He felt the handles and bolts of the clothes-press, pricked the panels with his penknife, as if he thought a confederal or two might be concealed within the half-inch plank, and finally looked at us under the press, which was raised on trestles, as though he would say, "You're all right in my hands, my friends. Catch them a humbugging me."

T'other gent, he devoted himself to the cords, examining them through a eye-glass, pulling them across his knee, and handing them down to be pulled at by us, which they was. Similiar to the first gent, there was something in *his* manner that made me think he had either been there before, or had been generally in the show-man line—he knew so very well what he was about.

When this was over, another friend of the Mrs. Davingpodge went on the stage, and proposed that we, the audience, should choose two of our "body" for to sit on the stage, keep a hey on the proceedings, and tie the knots which was going to be *hunted*. There was, at first, a great shuffling of feet, as if *all* was coming forrard, but it ended in nought. Our "body" didn't seem to know its members at all. At last, after a long pause, three gents stepped out, and, hoddly enough, one of the two as remained was the gent with the high shoulders and long nose. The other was a gentleman apparently of Jewish horigin, which nobody seemed to know.

The friend of the Mrs. Davingpodge then made another speech, saying nothing about sperrets, but giving us leave to form any opinion we liked, about what we come to see. We thought this very kind and civil, and me and Mrs. Lufkin applauded it with the big umbrella, till Tom said that was enough. After that the two Mrs. Davingpodge, which was so like each other that you couldn't tell which was *most* like, come forrard, and was tied hand and foot, one at each end of the clothes-press, the two gents pulling the cords tremendous tight indeed, and quite puffing with their exertions, so kindly made, to satisfy us that all was on the square.

As far as their legs went, I could see that *they* was pretty fast, but their hands being tied behind them out of sight, I had to take the word of the honourable high-shouldered gent, and t'other gent, that all was as tight as tight could be. The doors of the clothes-press was then shut, one at a time, and secured with a bolt by the high-shouldered gent. It was a very peculiar and obstinate bolt, and took more than a minute to fasten. Me and Mrs. Lufkin observed afterwards, that, every time the clothes-press had to be shut, this hagravating bolt took longer and longer to fix, the Mrs. Daving-

podge no doubt sitting quiet inside all the time.

At last all the doors was shut and fastened, and then came a wonderful thing! At a little square window, in the middle door, we saw a white hand flickering and beckoning! Presently it came out, the fingers, wrist, the whole arm, bare to the shoulder.

"The sperrets!" shrieked Mrs. L. clutching me round the neck in her flurry.

There was a burst of applause, followed by a titter, owing to Mrs. L.'s being overheard remarking to me that, to whatever spear of being the sperrets belonged, she could see that vaccination was practised there.

The clothes-press was now thrown open, and the Mrs. Davingpodge appeared tied as they was shut in. But a gent in the audience having expressed some dissatisfaction about the knots, the friend of Mrs. Davingpodge invited any one to examine the same—whereby there stepped out a dapper little old gentleman, in large blue spectacles, who looked at them for a long time, and then said it was all right, and very wonderful, he thought.

"What's your name, sir?" asked a very stern-looking gent, in our front row.

"I am ze Baron von—" began the little man. But his voice and manner was so comical, that the audience giggled, and neither me nor Mrs. Lufkin could catch the name. It was the same whenever he spoke, so I must call him the Baron von Giggle.

The Mrs. Davingpodge's friend now asked the baron whether he felt like—which means in English, didn't object to—being tied up in the clothes-press, between the Mrs. D. The baron hesitated, but, seeing another gent coming, said something that sounded like "yah voale," and got in. The friend then said that the gas must be lowered for this hinteresting hexperiment, seeing that the hintroductio into the clothes-press of a new horganisation habsorbed more hatmosphere. It seemed to us as if the hatmosphere was more likely to absorb the Baron von Giggle. Howsoever, the baron was tied by the high-shouldered gent in what must have been, from the faces he made, a very hagonising position, and the doors was shut.

Then wasn't there a to-do! The fiddle, the tambourine, and the post-horn, seemed to be fighting, the tambourine getting punished shocking; after which, the post-horn jumped out of the little window exactly on the shoulder of the gent of Jewish horigin, who seemed very much surprised indeed, and rubbed his shoulder with a rueful expression that greatly amused the audience. After they'd had their laugh, crash went the clothes-press doors open from within, and there sat the three gents all fast tied—the Baron von Giggle crowned with the tambourine, and the fiddle laid across his knees!

"Will you please to explain whether you felt any peculiar sensation, sir?" inquired the friend of the Mrs. D.

The baron winked, and blinked, and wriggled,

and, as well as me and Mrs. Lufkin could make out, replied :

"I zomzing on my nose felt. Over my two knees, zis fiddle I saw come. My head was wizzled in zingling brishes, like you said—buzz. So."

Tremendous applause, in which I could hear Tom Bowsicold at work with our big umbrella. After which, a circle was formed in the very middle of the room, the Mrs. Davingpodge in the centre, tied in a chair, and the lights put out. We was in total darkness, which was only to be expected, seeing what a lot of sperreted hatmosphere our forty-two horganisations must have swallered ! We was told to take hold of hands all round, so as to prevent any confederals getting in—which, unless there was confederals among the forty-two horganisations, they couldn't—when the Mrs. Davingpodge untied themselves in the most obliging manner—as easy as I could lace my boots—flung the fiddle and the ropes about over our heads, rubbed phosphorus (that wouldn't glitter, being bad and apologised for) upon a guitar, to show how it was carried about in the dark, which it might, or mightn't. Then the friend of the Mrs. Davingpodge getting on a chair, informed us the phenomena was done.

Not quite. For the same unsatisfied gent as had asked the Baron von Giggie for his name, got upon another chair, and observed that, without meaning any disrespect to the Mrs. Davingpodge, if the phenomenon was done, so was *he*. He had come to see the sperretes. Wheer was they ?

The friend of the Mrs. D. said he could only refer the honourable unsatisfied gent to the card hissed last Tuesday, in which, in deference to some strongish hobservations of the English press, and the council of a friend hement in littary circles—Mr. Thomas Bowsicold—the word "Phenomena" had been substituted for "Sperretes," and the public further hauthorised to call them what they pleased.

"Yet," persisted the unsatisfied gent, "by himplication, at least, you refer these phenomena, as you now call them, to something beyond what we know of nature."

"We calls it a hunrecognised law of physics," says the friend of the Mrs. D. "The Honourable Baron von——"

"Psha ! 'Baron !'" returns the unsatisfied gent. "Keep to the pint. You call it a hunrecognised law of physics. Why don't you, if the words reason, common sense, fair dealing, philanthropy, have any meaning at all with you, help us to 'recognise' this law, by telling us all you think, feel, and know, of its wonderful operations ? The interest would not be diminished, nay, it would augment with the progress of inquiry. Not only would guineas flow in freely, until Willy's his rooms could not hold us, but the Mrs. Davingpodge would be handed down to posterity as a great scientific name, and as one of the most honoured and honourable pioneers in the most difficult path of inquiry. So, tell us all about it."

"There is one pint the honourable gent has

overlooked," says the friend of the Mrs. D. "Our card, lately hissed, says all our necessary conditions must be complied with."

"Well, sir ?" says the unsatisfied gent.

"The condition we find *most* necessary," returns the friend, "is this : That nobody asks no questions. Turn off that gas !"

"Well, Dan'l, what do you think of my friends ?" asked Tom Bowsicold, as we walked away.

"That the Mrs. Davingpodge are not the worst jugglers I ever see," says I, "nor their audience the greatest fools."

AIR.

IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER II.

It is a general belief, confirmed by experience, that mountain air is purer than that of the plain, and the air of the plain than that of marshes and populous cities. The purest air is that which contains only oxygen, azote, and watery vapour. The higher you climb the mountain, the further you leave the plain behind you, the purer is the air. The invigorating qualities of mountain air are accounted for by the full dose of oxygen and the smaller charge of carbonic acid which it holds. It is an undoubted fact that the liberal oxygenation of the blood sustains bodily and mental energy. So long as they can breathe freely, horses and hares run fast and far, without being distressed. In ill-ventilated schoolrooms and hospitals, attention necessarily flags, and cures are difficult to be effected. It is not the pupils and teachers, nor the doctors and nurses who are in fault, but the chimneys, doors, and windows. At the end of a ten hours' walk over the Wengern Alp, by going up-hill very slowly and breathing the exhilarating air freely, I have felt no fatigue whatever ; only a little stiffness in the legs next day. In the highlands of Scotland, I have wandered among the hills all day without refreshment, and have returned to a late dinner, less fatigued than when I started : entirely owing to the air.

Perhaps the lesser proportion of carbon in the air may be one cause of the dwarf and stunted stature of Alpine plants in general. Last year, I brought home a miniature house-leek, gathered at the foot of the Jungfrau's glaciers, and planted it in a pot. In the somewhat hyper-carbonated atmosphere of a small country town, it has attained to thrice the size of any wild specimen of the species which I could find. And it cannot be the watering which has done it ; for it is less regularly and constantly supplied with moisture than in its native locality. On the other hand, pear-trees are notorious for thriftiness and robust health in the smoky air of towns.

In its enormous depths, the air contains a multitude of atoms which may be regarded as the sweepings and offscourings of the atmosphere. It has been sifted and interrogated to ascertain what part it plays in phenomena attributed to spontaneous generation ; and the result is, that the air disperses germs enough to render

that startling hypothesis needless. A ray of sunshine darting through a keyhole, reveals myriads of motes floating about unsuspected.

Accessory matters in the air are odours, pestilential miasms, and putrid vapours. In some spots, noxious gases are generated in abundance, and would accumulate to a dangerous amount, were they not swept away by storms and burnt by lightning. We do not yet know *what* it is (although we may one day discover) whose action, in concert with sulphuretted hydrogen gas, renders the neighbourhood of marshes and stagnant waters unhealthy. In marshes which cannot be drained, plantations of trees and shrubs are the best means of diminishing the danger.

Here, again, we see the analogy between the aerial and the watery oceans. The atmosphere resembles the sea, in being the receptacle of all sorts of gases and vapours, which escape into it from the earth's surface, exactly as the sea is of all sorts of waters and their solutions, which drain into it from continent and island. The air is the sewer for gaseous exhalations, as the sea is for watery liquids.

Changes in the purity of the air which are sufficient to produce disease and death, are still so really slight and subtle that they are not recognisable by chemical analysis in the laboratory, though sure to be detected by their effects on the nicer chemistry of the human frame. Several years ago, the French Academy sent out bottles, and caused specimens of air from various parts of the world to be brought home to be analysed. The nicest tests which the most skilful chemists could apply, were incapable of detecting any, the slightest, difference as to ingredients in the specimens from either side of the equator. To ascertain whether the air is everywhere identical, it was requisite to ascend to great heights, either by scaling the loftiest mountains, or through the agency of balloons. We have Saussure's observations made on the top of Mont Blanc, and Humbolt's on Chimborazo. With a clear sky, Gay-Lussac mounted in a balloon to the height of twenty thousand feet. He there found a temperature of nine degrees centigrade below the freezing-point; and he brought down air whose analysis proved it to be of the same composition, in respect to oxygen and azote, as our ordinary circumambient air here below.

Man, who is a veritable steam-engine, burns some three-quarters of a pound of carbon per day; and to burn it he requires more than a pound and a half of oxygen, which must be supplied to him by the air. A dearth of oxygen wears and waries him; want of it kills him. To breathe freely in-doors, a man should have at least seventy cubic yards of air. Patients in hospitals, children in dormitories, have scarcely half the necessary mass of air. The only way of remedying the short allowance is frequently to renew the vitiated air. In rooms which have chimneys, lighting a fire is an obvious and easy means of doing so. The air in the chimney, heated by the fire, ascends and escapes, drawing

after it the air in the room which has already passed through human lungs, and which is replaced by fresh air entering at the door. No large room in which people assemble in numbers should be without a fireplace and a chimney, not so much for warmth as for ventilation. The close air of a crowded apartment which is heated by a multitude of breaths and bodies, will be cooled by lighting a small fire, as the surest and the safest way of causing a stream of fresh air to enter. Architects frequently pay too little attention to ventilation. They reckon too much on the fissures of doors and windows. Many a snug apartment is consequently unhealthy. Dr. Franklin had such faith in the virtues of fresh air, that, besides breathing all he could, when the weather was warm enough he used to take air baths for hours at a time, reading, writing, and pursuing his private occupations in the costume adopted in Paradise.

For army stables, Vauban, the famous French engineer, allowed a metre (a little more than a yard) per horse, which system lasted until 1840. Statistics show that the mortality among those horses amounted to from ninety to ninety-five per cent. Renaud (a distinguished veterinarian who carefully studied ventilation, and who died of marsh fever in Italy while watching the typhus of horned cattle) proved that, to ventilate stables properly, every horse ought to have a space of a metre and a half. This reform, put in practice, reduced the mortality to forty per cent. It has been calculated that, since Vauban's time, the narrowness of the boxes has cost the French government no less than a thousand million horses.

A curious calculator estimates that three thousand men, located on an area of an acre of ground, would, in thirty-four days, make by their own transpiration an atmosphere eighty feet in height, which, if not dissipated by winds, would instantly become pestilential. Whence towns and armies are warned of—what we only know too well.

How minute must be the atoms composing these miasms and infectious emanations, whose presence science is unable to detect! Learned and speculative men have discussed the question whether matter be infinitely divisible or not. That it is not so, is rendered probable by Lavoisier's discovery respecting the proportions in which simple bodies (or those believed to be so) enter into chemical combination. But the wonderful and extreme divisibility of matter is illustrated in various ways.

One of the most subtle divisions of solid matter is to be found in the black pulverulent state of metals. It has been supposed that all matter is black when extensively divided, because the particles are too small to reflect light; but the form of the black particles is unknown to us, because, as Mr. Alfred Smee informs us, the highest powers of the microscope are insufficient to render them visible to the eye. Professor Faraday showed a method of dividing gold to an extreme amount. He precipitated the metal from its solution by

bi-sulphuret of carbon, and obtained a ruby-coloured liquid, in which metallic gold is so minute that the particles are invisible by any microscopic power. He satisfied himself that the famous ancient ruby-stained glass owes its colour to gold in a metallic state in extremest division. By adding gelatine to the ruby solution he made a ruby jelly precisely similar. We might thus prepare "aurum potabile," drinkable or eatable gold, if the old faith in its virtue still subsisted. But what is this to the separation of particles in the air which is left in the receiver of an air-pump when pumping can go no further, and which is far from being the greatest degree of rarity which air is capable of attaining? What is it to the division of particles implied by the perfume of flowers distributed and dispersed by air? One little blossom, a lily of the valley, will scent a room; a bunch of lilies of the valley, or a bouquet of heliotrope, will make a large room unbearable and untenable by many a person of not otherwise feeble constitution. There are even flowers that are scentless, as far as our olfactory organs can perceive, which give out emanations causing headache, if kept in apartments. And what, again, is this to the scented clue which the swift-running hare leaves on the grass, enabling the keen-nosed hound to track all his labyrinthine windings and doublings? As Mr. Smee says, the human nose is literally only a rudimentary organ when compared with the olfactory nerves of several other animals. As to smells, we are in the same position as the man born blind, who can only receive his ideas of light through the medium of the eyes of others.

Water supports both the largest and the smallest living creatures which people the globe. The monstrous whale revels in the ocean, the microscopic monad in the pool and the ditch. The inhabitants of air, like those of land, have their stature confined within far narrower limits. What is the bulk of the elephant, compared with that of the larger cetaceans? What is the smallness of the smallest quadruped, compared with the minuteness of the rotifer? which yet is comparatively large, for it is often visible by the unassisted eye. The difference in the respective sizes of insects, of bats, and of birds, is still less wide than in that of quadrupeds. The very smallest gnats, flies, and moths, are known and perceptible. The air contains no aerial infusoria, no animalcules which float or fly in air, as they swim in water. The microscope has revealed, in the air, nothing analogous to the infinite multitude of smallest living creatures with which stagnant waters teem. The dervish who covered his mouth with a cloth, that he might not destroy insect life when breathing, but who unscrupulously drank water from Indian tanks, took a troublesome precaution to mighty little purpose.

Winds are air put in horizontal motion. Their influence is most beneficial. Were there no winds, the vapours that rise from the sea would be returned back from the clouds, in showers, to the very same places in the sea

whence they came. On an earth where no winds blew, we should neither have green pastures, still waters, nor running brooks. Air is more liable to pollution and corruption than water; stagnation is ruinous to it. Ceaseless motion has been given to it; perpetual circulation and intermingling of its ingredients are required of it. The necessity of ventilation in our buildings, the wholesome influences of fresh air, are universally acknowledged. The cry in cities for fresh air from the mountains or the sea, reminds us continually of the life-giving virtues of circulation.

It has been well said that the girdling encircling air makes the whole world akin. It is the laboratory for the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms. The carbonic acid with which our breathing fills the air to-day, to-morrow seeks its way round the world. The date-trees that grow round the falls of the Nile will drink it in by their leaves; the cedars of Lebanon will take of it to add to their stature. The oxygen we are breathing now was distilled for us, some short time ago, by the magnolias of the Susquehanna, and the great trees that skirt the Amazon. By the winds, superfluous water is carried off and removed to other lands, where its agency is required; or it is treasured up, as the material of clouds, in the crystal vault of the firmament, the source, when the fitting season arrives, of the showers which provide for the wants of the year.

The vertical motions of the air seem to be no less important than its horizontal change of place. The one, indeed, begets the other. Upward and downward movements in fluids are consequent upon each other, and they involve lateral movements, that is, a true circulation. The sea, with its vapour, is the great engine which gives upward motion to the air. As soon as aqueous vapour is formed, it rises. The air resists its ascent; but it is lighter than the air: it therefore forces the resisting particles of air up along with it, and so produces ascending columns in the atmosphere. The adjacent air comes in to occupy the space which that carried up by the vapour leaves behind it, and so there is a horizontal current, or wind, produced.

For ages innumerable, Earth and Water have offered to man the means of locomotion; will Air ever yield the same? If we look to probabilities only, the answer is not difficult.

Man seems to have been destined, from the very first, gradually to become master of every department and region of nature; and to urge him to do so, out of sheer necessity, he was started in life with few appliances—except his intellect. His physical and material weakness drives him to seek aid in every outward object. With comparatively powerless teeth, claws, and muscles, to protect him from an enemy, he was forced to make to himself clubs, spears, bows and arrows, and to invent gunpowder. Armed with these, he can assume the offensive against the tiger, the bear, and the elephant. His utmost swiftness is sluggishness compared with that of many other creatures, who yet do not fly; so

he bestrides the horse and employs the dog to capture the hare, the deer, and the ostrich. With no covering of his own to keep away cold and to shield his skin from wounds at each rougher contact, he is forced to spin, to weave, to fabricate armour, besides appropriating the natural clothing of better-clad animals. An eminently featherless and wingless biped, all analogy leads us to believe him fated to traverse the regions of Air. Already mounted on his locomotive, he leaves the race-horse far behind; and there is every possibility that he may one day rival the soarings of the condor, the flights of the ringdove, and the migrations of the swallow and the crane.

From the time of the Montgolfiers to the present day, this was hoped to be effected by means of balloons. Ingenuity has been exhausted in contriving methods of guiding balloons, by rudders, sails, aerial oars, and wheels. Aërial locomotion was attempted to be conducted as if a balloon were a ship. So far from being a ship, however, a balloon is not even a buoy let loose from its moorings; for a buoy floats on the *surface* of the sea; whereas, our aërial sea has no surface. If it had one, we could never reach it; and if we reached it, we could not live on it. A balloon is a jelly-fish immersed in a fluid, by whose every current it is helplessly carried to and fro. The jelly-fish makes feeble efforts to direct its own course, with about as much success as those of a balloon. For eighty long years, it has been the balloons themselves which have rendered the direction of balloons impossible. To contend with air, so long as you are lighter than air, is folly and absurdity. Whether you make the form of your balloon conical, spherical, cylindrical, or fish-shaped—whether you enclose your ascensional power in one or many envelopes—the negative result is ever the same. Can we even imagine a balloon making way against a high wind?

A ship is a vessel floating on the surface of one fluid, the sea, than which it is altogether specifically lighter, and shaping its course through the impulse of forces, the winds, which exist in *another* fluid, the air, in which it is also partly immersed. Half of it is in one fluid, and half of it in another. If we substitute, to impel the vessel, the force of oars or of steam for that of the wind, the ship must still remain at the surface of contact of sea and air, in order that she may be supported by the heavier, and that her crew may breathe the lighter fluid.

It is clear, therefore, that, to traverse the air with the power of directing our own course, we must imitate, not the drifting of the jelly-fish nor the thistle-down, but the flight of birds in air, and of bladderless fishes in water. We must press on the medium in which we move, with violent mechanical (since we have not sufficient muscular) force. To mount in the air, and exercise self-direction in it, we must be specifically heavier than air. To master the air, instead of being its plaything, we must find a support in it, instead of serving it as a cushion. The bird, which is specifically heavier than air, contrives

to be supported by it: man must contrive to do the same.

We may ascend in the air by the help of a screw. There is a toy for children, something like the sails of a mill set in rapid rotation by pulling a string, which performs the feat. Mill sails are not "sails," but portions of a screw. The screw of a steamer is a mill-sail working in water, only it acts *upon* the water instead of being acted on *by* the wind. By applying the same principle we may mount in the air. The screw will bore into the air as a gimlet bores into wood; the one will drag after it its motive power, exactly as the other drags its handle after it. With the screw as the mechanism and steam as its mover, the problem enters the domain of technology, which is the glory of the present epoch. People are quite at liberty to make big eyes and shrug their shoulders. It is some encouragement to remember how once we were told that the iron wheel of a locomotive on an iron rail would slip round and round without advancing; that if the locomotive did advance, the first cow it met on the railroad would stop it; and that if it did upset the obstructive cow, it would run on so quickly as to kill the passengers by stopping their breath.

Once up, broad wings will enable us to sweep and to glide like a kite or an eagle. Progressive motion may be effected by copying the undulating flight of the wagtail and the woodpecker: only instead of measuring our inclined planes by yards deep, we may reckon on making them by furlongs.

BLOTTED OUT.

THOUGH it was not a pity which showed itself in any active form of sympathy, the neighbourhood did sincerely feel for the two ladies left so entirely alone in the world. They had plenty of money, certainly; a good house and a pretty garden; and as the legacy of poverty aggravates even the loss of a father (which in this case, however, was rather a relief than a loss), one might imagine a worse fate than that of Martha and Hester Todyeare, pitiable as theirs was; for, save this one exception of money, there was not a social circumstance in their lives which the poorest need envy.

Their father, William Todyeare, a passionate, self-willed man, had married a woman of a station much inferior to his own. He had married her because he had been obliged to take her on her own conditions; but he revenged himself for the force put upon him in the ordering of their relations by not acknowledging her as his wife, and letting her appear only as his house-keeper—and the mother of his two daughters. She was not a woman of the Griselda class, and could never bring herself to endure her wrongs in silence, but told the world, whenever it came in her way, the story of her sufferings and the fact of her marriage, leaving it to form its own conclusions. And the conclusion to which it came, almost unanimously, was to

avoid Fellfoot altogether, and leave the Todyears to manage their family affairs by themselves as they liked. People do not like to be made the confidants of suffering wives; and when the question in dispute is marriage or illegality they would rather not give their votes at all, but let judgment go by default. As in this case. Wherefore, when the father died, his two daughters, who had been under a cloud all their lives—unoffending as they were coming in for at least reflected disesteem—had not an acquaintance in the world, and were as much alone as if they and their servants were the sole inhabitants of a desert island.

Mr. Todyear was a man whose wrong-doing was rather insanity of temper than hardness of heart; so that when his temper was no longer crossed his conscience took the ascendant and tormented him fiercely—his faculty of repentance being as illimitable as his evil will had been resolute. When his wife died and the daily fret of her will in opposition to his own was at an end, he fell into a deep melancholy, which finally became a monomania of remorse for the hard life he had led her, and the injustice he had done her: not an active madness—merely a morbid, quiet kind of insanity, which gave an additional horror to the life and place; but no danger. The world said it was a judgment on him for his sins: so it was, but not in the way they thought.

It would have been no wonder if the whole family had gone raving mad, for Fellfoot was the most melancholy place to be found within the four seas. It was far away from any other house, and stood in a craggy hollow surrounded by woods. Woods and crags rose everywhere and kept the air in the basin below as stagnant as the water of a pond. The smoke rose straight from the chimneys of Fellfoot, when, in the villages beyond, houses were unroofed and forest trees uprooted in the gale; and the autumn leaves fell in quiet showers, like the pattering of rain on the ground, when the winds, elsewhere, stripped them with frantic fury from the boughs. Sometimes, indeed, a whirlwind caught the sides of the basin, eddying round and round among the woods till the dead leaves were piled up in thick drifts, where a man might be lost standing upright: so with the snow: but in general the air was still and dead, reeking with the vapours from the woods, and oppressive with the varied scents of vegetation; in autumn-time unhealthy, and even in spring and summer unrefreshing. The house was entirely hidden from view, save at one certain point in the road leading to it. It might have been burnt to the ground, and no one would have seen a flame; and every inmate in it might have been robbed and murdered, and the busy world beyond would not have heard a sound and might not have known for days. For it stood away from the main road, lost in this deep hollow, and the one approach to it was by a steep and rugged road, almost dangerous even with sure-footed horses; consequently, the very tradespeople called at Fellfoot as seldom as they could, and the mono-

tony of life was nearly unbroken. Nothing but one eternal view—the same from every window in the house, look where you would: nothing but trees—trees; gold and green, and white with blossom, and flushed with crimson veinings in the spring-time, truly; and gorgeous with all imaginable hues of scarlet and gold and russet and darkening bronze in the autumn; else of one uniform outline, of one eternal sameness.

To this inheritance, then, the two sisters, Martha and Hester Todyear, had succeeded. The Todyears were of German origin, and the name had been Todtjahr in earlier times; but it had got softened out of its former grim meaning into what gave local etymologists, ignorant of German, wide scope for wild derivations. They still retained the German look, and both were fair; but Martha, the elder, was a brown-haired woman, and tall and strong and resolute, with a square brow and a set jaw, yet kind and comely too; a woman with something of the masculine element in her, but not less than woman all the same. Hester, shy and timid, and with all her lines soft and flowing, was one of those golden-headed seraph-women, made up of love and fear, who get more cared for than the rest of the world, because they have no fibre in them, no power of resistance or of self-support or of will—very sweet and lovely and feminine, but who live and die mere girls to the last: people for whom the strong invariably sacrifice themselves, or to whom they are sacrificed.

There was a great difference in age between them; Martha being ten years the elder, which made her more mother than sister, for the mother had not lived beyond the little one's first childhood, and Martha had, therefore, taken her entirely to herself. And as no governess was allowed at Fellfoot, and no companions of their own age ever invited, even if any could have been found willing to come, it had been a very entire taking to herself. And, as a consequence, the whole force of the two natures, intensified by the isolation of their lives, had concentrated into one deep love for each other—Martha's the maternal love of the stronger, and Hester's the dependent love of the child, with that other faculty of hers, her fear, reserved for her father. There was no one else to love or fear, for they did not know the only relatives they had, Faber and Susan Todyear (the Faber Todyears as they were generally called), the children of the younger brother, but older than both these sisters; Susan being older than Martha, and Faber, the elder, almost old enough to be Hester's father. There had been a coolness between the two families ever since William Todyear, of Fellfoot, had married his housekeeper.

The funeral had taken place three days ago, and the two sisters were sitting in the garden together. It was in the hot and sultry summer time, when the woods looked unfathomable, and when the air was almost tropical with heat and steaming vapours; it was one of those lowering summer days when the angry temper of the atmosphere seems to react on men, and to breed angry tempers in the soul. Its only effect on

the sisters was to make Martha more silent, and Hester more timid and easily startled than usual. They were sitting now on the seat under the great cedar-tree on the lawn; and as the spreading branches stretched over them, throwing them into deep shadow, you might have fancied they were women of death sitting in the gateway of the tomb; nothing more funeral could be seen anywhere than those two in their deep mourning—Martha with her close black cap covering all her hair, and Hester with her golden uncurled tresses falling over her face like a veil for her sorrow—as they sat under the great cedar-tree in what might have been a garden of graves, for its solitude and desolateness.

Looking up from a small piece of work she held in her hand, Martha said, suddenly, "It is dull for you here, Hetty."

Hester opened her clear childlike eyes, and put back the crowding hair from her face. "Dull?" she said, in a tone of surprise. "I am very happy here with you, Martha; what more do we want than we have got?"

"You are young, dear, and ought to see a little of the world. We have money, and could travel, if you would like it; or our cousins have asked us to stay with them, if you would like that better. I had a letter from Susan this morning; 'Faber will be here to-day,' she says."

"To-day!" echoed Hester, in a voice of dismay. "How I wish he was not coming!"

"So do I; but that does not answer my question about going away."

"I will do as you like, Martha," Hester replied, meekly; "but I hate gaiety, as you know."

"Dear child!" interrupted her sister, smiling, "have you ever known it?"

Hester smiled too. "Not much of it, certainly," she said; "but you understand me, don't you?"

"Yes. Still I think a little change would do you good, my dear. You are too depressed here, and I have seen how nervous you have become lately. I should like you to leave Fell-foot for a little while."

"Me to leave!" cried Hester, with quick alarm; "not without you, Martha."

"Certainly not. There, see how that has fluttered you!—but both together; perhaps to Switzerland in the spring, after a winter in Paris or Italy. Would you like that better than Greymoor and the Faber Todyears?"

"Oh, anything better than that!" cried Hester. "I have such a strong presentiment against those people."

"So have I," said Martha; "but such feelings are very foolish, and, indeed, wrong if indulged in."

"Who is that?" Hester exclaimed, pointing to the one turn of road which they could see from the garden.

It was a solitary horseman, picking his way down the steep path carefully.

"I dare say that is Faber Todyear," said

Martha; and she, too, turned a little pale, and her teeth set themselves together as if she had a task before her both difficult and disagreeable.

Soon the horseman was out of sight, lost in the windings of the wood-path; and presently they heard the gate-bell ring loudly as he reined his horse at the entrance. The servant opened the gate, and a tall, dark, handsome man, first asking if the ladies were at home, dismounted and came quickly towards them.

"How like papa," said Hester, shrinking away. "Oh, Martha, he has come for no good."

Why did she say that? It is not usual for young women to regard the advent of handsome cousins with displeasure or terror, and Faber Todyear was one whom most girls would have welcomed very cordially; yet both sisters shrank from him, in their several ways, as if he had been something terrifying or frightful. He was neither. He was a tall, handsome, manly-looking person, with nothing specially noteworthy about him, save a blandness of manner that seemed a little excessive and out of harmony with his character, as judged of by his face. That a man with inscrutable eyes, penthouse brows, a flat forehead, a broad jaw, and thin, closely shut lips, should be as gracious and gallant as a Bath M.C.—that so supple a back should lead up to so stern a head, might seem, to a close observer, out of course and misfitting; yet there was nothing about him to which the most fastidious could object, so perfectly well bred, well looking, and well appointed was he.

He raised his hat as he came near them, and held out his hand. Martha gave him hers with strange coldness, Hester with repugnance.

"I am sorry I could not come in time," he said; "I should have liked to pay the last respects to my poor uncle."

Martha slightly moved her head. "Thank you," she said; and that was all.

"I suppose his last moments were peaceful? they generally are in such cases as his," he asked. "Did he recover at all? I mean, was he sane at any time before his death?"

"Sane! he was never insane," said Martha, bluntly. "He was depressed and melancholy, but he never lost his intellects."

Faber smiled blandly, but unpleasantly. "He left a will, that means?" he said, with his interrogative accent; "one made quite of late, I presume?"

"He left no will," said Martha, and looked him straight in the face.

"Indeed!" and as he spoke he glanced round him, at the house and garden and the woods about, as if with a new interest. This did not escape his cousin.

"He wished my sister and myself to inherit equally, so there was no need for any will," she added.

Again Faber Todyear raised his heavy eyebrows and smiled.

"The very reason why he should have made one, while his mind was capable of an inde-

pendent act, and in such a condition that the law would recognise its acts as valid," he observed.

"The law gives the same award as his wishes," said Martha, steadily. "His only children, we share alike; and it is not probable that we shall ever have divided interests."

"I think you labour under a mistake," said Faber; "the law"—emphatically—"will award differently."

"Hester, my dear, go and see if dinner is nearly ready," said Martha to her sister. "I dare say Mr. Todyear" (neither had called the other cousin yet, and he had not given them any name at all) "will dine with us while his horse is resting."

And Faber smiled, and looked at Hester graciously, and said, "Yes, he would remain very glad," and thanked them for their kindness.

When they were alone, Martha, turning to her cousin, said abruptly: "So, you have come to dispute the property, Mr. Todyear?"

He bowed.

"I have come to claim it," he replied; "there are no grounds for dispute. You know as well as I, that the law does not recognise a man's illegitimate children, however openly he may have done so. Had your father wished you to inherit his property, he would have made a will while sane and capable of managing his own affairs; with a will of late date—since his mind went, or with none at all, your claims are absolutely worthless. I am sorry to speak with such seeming harshness, but you are a woman to whom, I am sure, one can speak of business matters plainly."

"I told you in my letter that you were mistaken," returned Martha. "My mother was lawfully married, nearly two years before I was born."

He shrugged his shoulders, and again smiled.

"I have the certificate," said Martha, flushing a little, and speaking with a certain hurried and peremptory accent; "and this."

She pointed to a ruby ring she wore, inside which was engraved her mother's name, her father's, and the date of their marriage, with "married" set against the date. Perhaps not of much value as legal evidence, but of infinite preciousness to Martha, as it had been to her mother.

"What is that?" asked Faber, contemptuously. "Allow me," and he held out his hand for it.

She drew it from her finger, and gave it to him, calling his attention to the letters inside. He looked at it intently, both at the engraving and the stone, for it was a balass ruby of large size, and intrinsically worth much. Then he gave it back to her with a smile, shaking his head, as he said:

"Counsel would say, 'the clever dodge of an artful woman.' If your claims rest on no more solid foundation than this, and if your proofs are of no greater legal value, the question will soon be decided."

"You forget the certificate," said Martha.

"Ah! the certificate! That is something more to your purpose. Yes, I confess I should like to look at this certificate, if you will allow me; it is the first time I have heard of it, and I am curious."

"You shall see it," Martha said loftily; and they both walked across the lawn, and through the opened French window into the drawing-room, where Martha left him, while she went up-stairs to her own room for those sacred "marriage lines," which were her own and her sister's all.

"You keep this in a safe place, I suppose?" asked Faber, carelessly, while examining it with even more attention than he gave to the ring.

"Yes," Martha answered; "it is never out of my own possession: I keep it with my valuables in my own room."

"Ah! the best place," said Faber.

After turning the paper about, and looking at it in every light, as if he would have detected a forgery in the very substance of the paper itself—after counting up dates, and comparing handwritings, knitting his brows with anxious meaning as he was slowly and reluctantly obliged to acknowledge the truth, Faber handed back the certificate, and pronounced himself satisfied; thanking his kind cousin—he called her cousin now—for her patience and candour, and begging her to dismiss from her mind all remembrance of the fact that he had ever been so misled by ignorance and common report as to doubt the exact legality of their condition. He was very glad he had come himself, he said, and had made personal acquaintance with his cousins: he thought it so much the best thing to do at all times, and nothing was ever lost by frankness and candour. If he had delegated this task to a lawyer, what a bungle would have been made of it! but now, everything was as clear as daylight, and there was no possibility of further mistake remaining. They had all done their duty, and was not that a pleasure to think of? He then wound up a slightly too florid oration by inviting them both to Greymoor; where, at least, he could promise them a somewhat different kind of prospect—laughing—to what they had here, for save in their own garden, there was not a tree nearer than a day's journey!

To which Martha replied, a little bluntly, perhaps, but good naturedly enough, that she and her sister were not much given to visiting, or great runaways from home. Then she added: "My sister knows nothing of the doubts which were thrown upon our mother's marriage; of what good to perplex and distress one so young and innocent?"

And Faber said, "Of what good?" too; and commended her wise care with almost enthusiastic appreciation. Dinner being ready, he asked his kind cousin's leave to go up-stairs to make his toilette.

It was a pleasant house, he said, when he returned, and capital rooms; and the conversation fell upon the size and disposition of them, all in the most natural and easy manner possible; and

yet Martha did not like the talk. To a reserved woman it was a little too much like a freedom to pry so narrowly into the personalities of their domestic life; but Faber was a man difficult to withstand on any point which he might choose to press, there was so much blandness and friendly confidence of manner united to so much resoluteness of purpose and distinctness of aim. Which did not much assuage Martha's discomfort, or make her more affectionately inclined to their cousin, or disposed to discuss the sites and aspects of the Fellfoot bedrooms with greater pleasure.

On the whole, the sisters had never passed a more uncomfortable time than they did during this visit, and, indeed, as the hours wore on, Hester's dislike became only too apparent. She sat as far away from Faber as was possible, her head bent over her work, seldom looking up, and never speaking unless spoken to, and then she gave only curt cold answers, looking at Martha while speaking to her cousin. But he seemed to be much struck with her; and truly she was a rarely beautiful creature—and almost persecuted her with his attentions and compliments, seldom taking his eyes from her, and doing what he could to engage her attention and win a pleasant look for his reward. But the girl sat resolutely, almost sullenly, apart, in what would have been a rude display of temper and caprice, but for the pleading sweetness of her timid manners and the softening charm of her beauty.

Heartily glad were they when the moment came for his leave-taking, and they were rid of his handsome face and flattering smiles. Their solitude came like a delicious repose to them after the weariness of this man's visit; and the two sisters sat together rather later than usual, and even more lovingly than usual, as if to enjoy to the fullest the one true happiness of their lives. But their comments on their cousin were none of the most complimentary, and their determination not to know him better, and by no means to go to Greymoor, very distinct. Then they went to bed, and the house was shut up for the night; if, indeed, that could be called "shutting up," which was merely locking the front door, and leaving half the windows open. The utter solitude of the place had made them careless, and the nightly fastening of Fellfoot had grown to be a mere name. The sisters always slept with their windows open; not so much as a stray cat invading the premises in general; and to-night—this hot, stifling, thundery night—the house was like a pierced fan, open at all sides to catch the faintest breath of air stirring.

At about midnight the storm burst forth. It had been brooding all the day, and when it came it came with terrific violence; but, strangely enough, it did not rouse the household—not even Hester at the first, constitutionally susceptible to all the influences of electricity as she was. At last one tremendous flash, followed by a deafening roar, woke her up; and just in her night-dress as she was—without slippers or

wrapper—she softly opened her bedroom door, and crept across the passage to take refuge with her sister; wondering, indeed, why she had not come to her, as she generally did when there was a thunderstorm, knowing her nervousness.

She found the door, turned the handle, and went in; but as she entered her foot slipped in something strange, something thick and wet and warm. She shuddered and called "Martha," but no one answered; again she cried; and then a flash, flaming through the air, showed her the body of her sister, with her face downward to the carpet, lying in a shining pool of crimson on the floor. But it did not show her that other thing crouched in the dark corner beyond.

"Martha! Martha!" Hester whispered, and touched her, kneeling by her; and kneeling in the warm, wet, crimson pool. Again the lightning flashed, showing now the white night-dress, her hands and the dropping lengths of her golden hair, all dyed crimson—all wet and soaked in blood.

"Martha! Martha! Wake! Speak to me!" cried Hester, turning the dead face towards her; but the head fell heavily back in her arms, and there was no kind voice to answer her.

Then the truth came upon the girl, and saying, "Take me with you!" she flung her arms over the dead body, and sank senseless—her pale head resting on her sister's neck, and from head to foot crimsoned with her blood.

The man crouching in the corner came and looked at them both; turning the dark lantern in his hand full upon them while he stood and studied them; and once carefully putting back the blood-stained hair from Hester's face, he stooped down and kissed her lips, and kissed them again, with a strange pleasure. Then he cut a long look from her head, and turning away, continued his search for what he wanted: all the while as quiet and unmoved and resolute as if murder was an every-day occurrence, and need stir no man's nerves. When he had found what he wanted, he looked again at the two lying on the floor, and taking up Martha's hand, drew the ruby ring from her finger; and guided now by the flashes of the fierce tempest, he went softly out by the way by which he had entered, letting himself down from the window noiselessly.

As the morning broke the storm passed, and when the servants came to call their mistress it was a glad fresh summer day: the woods were alive with the songs of birds and the hum of bees; the trees and flowers were radiant with freshened bloom, and rich in scents; the blue sky had not a cloud, and the green earth did not seem to have a care—but within that quiet room lay one sister stabbed to the heart, and the other paralysed and imbecile.

It had been done for plunder, every one said: Martha's costly ruby ring was gone; and the davenport, in which she kept her money and valuables, was rifled; and though some things which, it might have been thought, would have tempted a thief, were left, others were taken, and all was in confusion. No one knew, indeed, though, what had been taken; for

Martha Todycare was not a communicative woman, and even Hester was never told of any business matter; so that it was only conjecture at the best. One thing, however, was sure, the ring—and, presumably, money, from the rifled state of the davenport. This was all that was ever known; and who had done the deed no one could imagine, or why, unless for plunder; and yet, if for plunder, why had not certain valuables been taken, lying handy as they did? It was conjectured that the assassin had got in by the open window, climbing up by the ivy which grew thick over the house, and favoured by the storm which drowned any noise he might have made. Martha had been struck down, perhaps while crossing the room, probably to go to her sister. There was no sign of any struggle, and she lay in the position in which a person would have fallen if struck from behind. There was no expression of terror on her face, as would have been had she seen her assailant; but it was calm and still as usual, showing that at least she had been spared the anguish of knowledge: which was something.

Faber was just leaving the inn, where he had put up for the night (having lost his way between Fellfoot and the railway inn where he was rightly bound, so taking refuge here, at midnight or after, drenched to the skin with the terrible storm), when the fearful news of the murder came in. The Fellfoot gardener, half scared himself, had ridden over to the village for legal assistance; for the two ladies were so lonely there was no one to turn to as of course, and the law must do its business without the intervention of any friend. When it was found that Faber was still within distance, to him was at once given the superintendence of matters and the charge of Hester; and all with whom he was brought in contact expressed their satisfaction with him, so kindly, so prompt, so considerate as he was, and so anxious for the welfare of his poor young cousin.

The world was quite at rest on the subject of Hester Todycare, when Faber's sister Susan came down to Fellfoot, and at once stepped into Martha's place of head and manager. Hester, indeed, was unfit to undertake any kind of responsibility. Still gentle, lovely, timid, she showed only one active feeling—and that was an intensity of hatred for Faber, and a childlike dread of Susan.

Susan was not unlike what Martha might have been if harder, older, and sterner; Martha, with all her womanly tenderness left out, and her strength roughened and sharpened to hardness and aggressiveness. They carried Hester off to Greymoor for change of air. It was of no use her protesting or refusing: she was in their hands, and there was no one to help her out of them. So they took her to their own house, and people said they hoped the change would do her good, poor girl; but it was not a pleasant charge her cousins had taken on themselves, for who would like to have a dazed half-idiot always about them? Indeed, from the first Susan seemed to have felt it as a painful duty that

must be accepted, doing her best to perform her part as well as was in her nature to allow; but she could never conquer the girl's visible terror of her, nor could Faber overcome her hatred, and the more he tried with flatteries and caresses and tender little cares—cares so tender that one could scarcely understand how they came from so strong and stern a person—the more pronounced was her hatred, her horror, and her fear.

Greymoor was, as he had said, the very antithesis of Fellfoot—a wild, lonely, desolate moor, without a tree or shrub anywhere; an illimitable horizon lost in the restless sea for half the distance round, the other half leading down into a broad open country, showing villages and shady copse-lands, meadows full of sheep and cattle, and churches with their flame-shaped spires pointed ever up to heaven, and all the sweet pastoral richness of English country life; but this only in the distance—a peace and sweetness not belonging to the dwellers in that desolate house on the moor; like happiness seen in other's lives, but not coming near our own.

But the change from the damp low-lying house at Fellfoot did Hester the physical good people had anticipated; her cheek lost a little of its cream-coloured, corpse-like look and got rosier in hue, and more transparent; her eyes were less fixed and more observant; she ate more as if she knew that she was eating, and not only as if it was a merely instinctive act of obedience; she lifted her feet from the ground when she walked, and did not drag them, as she had done; sometimes the tears came into her eyes as if she was thinking, and sometimes her colour changed; she would answer now when spoken to, instead of, as hitherto, sitting dumb and motionless until Faber came near her, when she would flame up into a passion of wrath more terrible because more mad than even her stupor had been; or when Susan touched her, and then she would utter a little cry as if she had been hurt, and shrink away from her as a half-tamed animal might have done. Now, however, all this had become modified, and some of her symptoms had wholly disappeared; and by the time she had been nearly a year at Greymoor she was the same as other people, saving always her intense timidity, and the wonderfully touching sweetness of her beauty. Lovely as she had always been, she was now almost unearthly; and looked, as an old woman said of her, "as if she had been in heaven for a time."

The year was round again, and it was a warm calm summer's evening, with the wind blowing softly from the south, like the days of rest which sometimes come before a death. Hester was in the garden, sitting where she could see the sea—her favourite place; and Susan and Faber were standing by the window in the dining-room talking low together.

"I do not like it, Faber," said Susan; "if it is against her consent, it will be a crime."

"Crime or no, it must be," said Faber, in a

stern voice; "if I do not marry her, we are ruined."

"Yes, yes, I know all that; you have told me often enough! I only say that I do not like the poor thing to be forced; and she certainly does not seem inclined to make a willing bride."

"I have love enough for two, and will enough as well," said Faber.

His sister looked at him with genuine surprise. "Do you mean that you love her?" she asked, slowly.

"As I never loved before, and could never love again," he answered. "I have loved her from the beginning, and if even she was not a necessity by circumstances, she should be my wife by my own free will and act of love."

"You are mad," said Susan, disdainfully; "I should as soon have thought of your loving a doll."

"I dare say you would," he answered, with indifference; "but you see you do not know much about love."

"Still, I shall not like her to be forced," said Susan, going back to the point.

"She shall be my wife, forced or not," repeated Faber; and left the room.

What he had said about their being ruined was only too true. More than a year ago this had come upon them, not by their own fault so much as through the crafty advice of their lawyer, who had persuaded Faber to invest in certain mining speculations in which he held a large stake, and at a time when he knew the property was worth nothing. A convenient way of shifting his own liabilities and saving himself—not uncommon among friends. Which state of things made Hester in truth a necessity, as he had said; and willing or unwilling, she had to be wooed and won, even if she was never won. And yet he resolved to win her. A man of strong passions and arbitrary will cannot easily accept defeat; and whatever the secret charm to him which Susan could not discover, the result was, he loved her, and he was determined that she should love him—after marriage if not before.

When he left his sister he went out to Hester sitting in the garden, watching the white ships sailing—sailing, who knew where? watching them with that vague wistfulness one feels so often when looking at the sea, that desire one scarcely knows for what, but for something removed from our present life. Faber stood by her for some time, studying her face as she looked and dreamed; then he said, in a low, soft voice, softer and richer than usual, and it was always soft to her: "Would you like to travel, Hester?"

Her eyes filled with tears. She remembered who had asked the same question just about a year ago, and how it had been answered.

"I should like to leave Greymoor," she said.

"You do not like it?"

"No; you know that I do not," she answered, quietly, and turned away.

"You can go where you like, Hester," Faber

said. "We are your friends, not your jailers. Where would you like to go?"

"Home," said Hester, and looked into his face.

He blenched a little; but then he took her hands and held them, though she tried to release them. "You shall go to Fellfoot next week, or earlier—as soon as you will; on one condition," he said, speaking slowly and deliberately, though still very softly; "that you take me with you, as one having the right to be there—the right to be by your side."

"What do you mean?" she said, startled.

"That you take me with you as your husband!"

She gave a cry and covered her face, he having loosed her hands to put his arms round her waist.

"It must be, Hester," he continued. "I love you, and I have vowed to Heaven to make you mine."

"To Heaven!" she cried, lifting up her white face. "What have *you* to do with Heaven, cousin Faber?"

He shrank back as if she had struck him, and then, as if fearing she would escape him, he drew her to him again, and made her sit down on the seat by him. "Hester," he then said, speaking calmly as to voice and manner, though passions too hot for words were raging in his heart, "you believe that you are the owner of Fellfoot, do you not? Yes, I see that you do. Listen to me attentively. You are not the owner; it belongs to my sister Susan and myself, as the heirs-at-law of your father. You and your poor sister were not his heirs, Hester—you were illegitimate: your mother was never married." He paused, waiting for her to speak; but she said nothing. "At this moment," he continued, "you have absolutely nothing in the world but what you receive through me. I have not cared to bring this before you hitherto. I have waited until time had a little healed and restored you, before touching on matters that must be so painful to you, my poor child! Also, I have waited until I spoke to you of my love, reserving this as an argument to decide you. It must be, Hester; your only safety lies by my side. You must marry me that you may live."

"I will not!" cried Hester, tearing herself away from him. "I will die first."

"You will, you must, and you shall," returned her cousin, in an inflexible, monotonous voice. "If I carry you to the church in my arms like a child, you shall be my wife. I love you, and in your own interests I will make you love me!"

"Never!" she cried, flinging up his hand. "I hate you! You are terrible and loathsome to me—you are telling me lies—you are all over blood!"

And as she spoke the red sunset poured over him, as if it did indeed shine through blood.

They did not meet again that evening; for Hester rushed to her own room, the door of

which she locked, and no threats or entreaties of either brother or sister could induce her to open it again—scarcely to answer when she was called and spoken to.

Pale, restless, seeking she knew not what, but seeking Something, Hester wandered through the house that night like a ghost come up from the grave. Moving with her light noiseless tread, and shading the candle with her hand, she went down stairs, and into the library—her cousin Faber's own peculiar room. Haunted she knew not with what—lured on she knew not to what—she opened drawers and desks and cupboards, searching, searching for something—that nameless Something which always had been before her mind as one day to be found. At last she tried a certain desk; it was locked, but by some oversight the key had been left in the lock, though Faber was in general both careful and exact. She opened it, and turned the contents—papers, trifles, letters—over and over; but she found nothing to interest her. She opened some little packets, and some small boxes; but the locks of hair, and the rings, and the lockets, and little scraps of verses they contained, were nothing to her. At last she fell upon a packet sealed and secured with more than ordinary care. She broke the seals; she cut the string; and took from the cover a paper which she soon made out to be her mother's certificate of marriage, a long lock of golden hair, and the ruby ring which had been stolen from her sister the night she was murdered.

Now she understood what had haunted her poor bewildered brain, and what had lured her on till she had found it; now she knew what she had dumbly divined; and both the past and herself were revealed to her. Quietly, with ashen cheeks and glazed eyes, she glided up-stairs again; the house yet in its first heavy sleep, and she walking so softly she would not have roused even one who watched. Still shading the candle with her hand she stopped at her cousin's door; she tried it, it was unfastened; and softly opening it she glided in, and went up to the bed where he lay sleeping.

For a moment she stood and watched him, as he tossed his dark head restlessly on the pillow, muttering in his sleep. Then she touched his hand, bending her face near to his and calling him by his name. He started up with a man's shout of defiance; a shout that passed into a low moan of abject terror when he saw that ghastly face pressed so near to his, the glistening hair streaming round it and falling on to the bed-clothes, and the slight figure, looking still slier in its melancholy black, bending over him. In one hand she held the paper, the ring, and the lock of hair; in the other the candle; and the light fell on the ruby and the gold in strange fantastic brilliance.

"I told you that you were all over blood, Faber," she said, in a low penetrating voice. "Now I know it. Do not ask me to forgive you; I do not forgive you."

In the morning a great cry went through the house. Still fully dressed, and with all her hair combed straight on her shoulders like a parted veil of gold, Hester was found lying on her bed, stone dead and cold and stiff. No sign of struggle nor of any means of self-destruction was about; no poison, no blood, no knife, no cord: a quiet pale waxen figure, lying as if asleep, and full of maidenly sweetness and beauty even in its death.

The verdict was, "Died by the visitation of God;" the medical men said "Syncope of the spine;" and no one was ever heard to say it was an unrighteous verdict, or that any other could have been returned. If there was one who knew more than the rest, he passed through life unchallenged and unsuspected. The dead told no tales, and the ruby ring which Faber Todyeare always wore now, was like the dead, and betrayed nothing.

But though Fellfoot and all the property belonging to the two sisters came by right and law now to Faber and Susan, and though their ruined fortunes were repaired without the world ever knowing that they had been endangered, yet their prosperity brought no blessing with it. Susan died before that year's fruits were ripened in the Fellfoot gardens; and for all his life after Faber Todyeare was a haunted, hunted, broken-down man, to be met wandering about the earth, without rest or peace or love or home; a miserable wretch whom some called mad, but of whom the priest who saw him die in a lonely little village in France, said with a long-drawn breath, as he closed his eyes: "That man was a murderer."

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